A LETTER BOOK

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SELECTED WITH AN INTRODUCTION
ON THE HISTORY AND ART OF
LETTER-WRITING

BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

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PREFACE

When my publishers were good enough to propose that I should undertake this book, they were also good enough to suggest that the Introduction should be of a character somewhat different from that of a school-anthology, and should attempt to deal with the Art of Letter-writing, and the nature of the Letter, as such. I formed a plan accordingly, by which the letters, and their separate Prefatory Notes, might be as it were illustrations to the Introduction, which was intended in turn to be a guide to them. Having done this with a proper *Pourvu que Dieu lui prête vie* referring to both book and author, I thought it well to look up next what had been done in the way before me, at least to the extent of what the London Library could provide me in circumstances of enforced abstinence from the Museum and from "Bodley." From its catalogue I selected a curious eighteenth-century *Art of Letter Writing*, and four nineteenth and earliest twentieth century books—Roberts's *History of Letter Writing* (1843) with Pickering's ever-beloved title-page and his beautiful clear print; the *Littérature Epistolaire* of Barbey d'Aurevilly—a critic never to be neglected though always to be consulted with eyes wide open and brain alert; finally, two Essays in Dr. Jessopp's *Studies by a Recluse* and in the *Men and Letters* of Mr. Herbert Paul, once a very frequent associate of mine. The title of the first men-

tioned book speaks it pretty thoroughly. "The Art of Letter Writing: Divided into Two Parts. The First: Containing Rules and Directions for writing letters on all sorts of subjects [*this line as well as several others is Rubricked*] with a variety of examples equally elegant and instructive. The Second: a Collection of Letters on the Most interesting occasions of life in which are inserted—The proper method of Addressing Persons of all ranks; some necessary orthographical directions, the right forms of message for cards; and thoughts upon a multiplicity of subjects; the whole composed upon an entirely new plan—chiefly calculated for the instruction of youth, but may be [*sic*] of singular service to Gentlemen, Ladies and all others who are desirous to attain the true style and manner of a polite epistolary intercourse." May our own little book have no worse fortune! Mr. Roberts's avowedly restricts itself to the fifth century as a *terminus ad quem*, though it professes to start "from the earliest times," and its seven hundred pages deal very honestly and fully with their subjects. The essays of Dr. Jessopp and Mr. Paul are of course merely Essays, of a score or two of pages: though the first is pretty wide in its scope. There would be nothing but good to be said of either, if both had not been, not perhaps blasphemous but parsimonious of praise, towards "Our Lady of the Rocks." It cannot be too often or too solemnly laid down that an adoration of Madame de Sévigné as a letter-writer is not crotchet or fashion or affectation—is no result of merely taking authority on trust. The more one reads her, and the more one reads others, the more convinced should one be of her absolute non-pareility in almost every kind of genuine letter (as apart from letters that are really pamphlets or speeches or sermons) except pure love-letters, of

which we have none from her. As for *Littérature Epistolaire*, it is a collection of some two dozen reviews of various modern reprints of letters by distinguished writers—mostly but not all French. The author has throughout used the letters he is considering almost wholly as tell-tales of character, not as examples of art: and therefore he does not, except in possible glances, require further attention, though the book is full of interesting things. Its judgment of one of our greatest, and one of the greatest of all, letter-writers—Horace Walpole—is too severe, but not, like Macaulay's, superficially insistent on superficial defects, and ought not to be neglected by anyone who studies the subject.

If, however, there was no need to rely on any of these books, they did nothing to hinder in the peculiar way in which I had feared some hindrance. For it is a nuisance to find that somebody else has done something in the precise way in which you have planned doing it. I have not yet encountered that nuisance here. Dr. Jessopp's general plan is most like mine—indeed some similarity was unavoidable: but the two are not identical, and I had planned mine before I knew anything about his.

So with this prelude let us go to business, only premising further that the object, unlike that of the anonymous Augustan, is not to "give rules and instructions for writing good letters," except in the way (which far excels all rules and instructions) of showing how good letters have been written. Let us also modestly trust that the collection may deal with some "interesting occasions of life" and contain "thoughts on a [fair] multiplicity of subjects." Having been, as above observed, unable during the composition of this book to visit London or Oxford, I have had to rely occasionally on friendly

assistance. I owe particular thanks (as indeed I have owed them at almost any time these forty years) to the Rev. William Hunt, D.Litt., Honorary Fellow of Trinity College, Oxford: and I am also indebted to Miss Elsie Hitchcock for some kind aid at the Museum given me through the intermediation of Professor Ker.

Besides the thanks given to Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, Mr. Kipling and Dr. Williamson in the text in reference to certain new or almost new letters, we owe very sincere gratitude for permission to reprint the following important matters:

His Honour Judge Parry. Two letters from "Letters from Dorothy Osborne to Sir William Temple."

Messrs. Douglas & Foulis. A letter to Joanna Baillie, from "Familiar Letters of Sir Walter Scott."

Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co. Two letters from Mrs. Carlyle's "Letters and Memorials," and one letter from Sir G. O. Trevelyan's "Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay."

Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd. Three letters from "The Letters of Charles Dickens"; one letter by FitzGerald and one by Thomas Carlyle, from "Letters and Literary Remains of Edward FitzGerald"; one letter from "Charles Kingsley: his Letters and Memories of his Life"; and two extracts from "Further Records, 1848-1883," by Frances Anne Kemble.

Mr. John Murray. One letter from "The Letters of Elizabeth Barrett Browning."

GEORGE SAINTSBURY.

1 Royal Crescent, Bath,
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INTRODUCTION

THE HISTORY AND ART OF LETTER WRITING

I

ANCIENT HISTORY

On letter-writing, as on most things that can themselves be written and talked about, there are current many *clichés*—stock and banal sayings that express, or have at some time expressed, a certain amount of truth. The most familiar of these for a good many years past has been that the penny post has killed it. Whether revival of the twopenny has caused it to exhibit any kind of corresponding resurrectionary symptoms is a matter which cannot yet be pronounced upon. But it may be possible to avoid these *clichés*, or at any rate to make no more than necessary glances at them, in composing this little paper, which aims at being a discussion of the Letter as a branch of Literature, no less than an introduction to the specimens of the kind which follow.

If, according to a famous dictum, "Everything has been said," it follows that every definition must have been already made. Therefore, no doubt, somebody has, or many bodies have, before now defined or at least

described the Letter as that kind of communication of thought or fact to another person which most immediately succeeds the oral, and supplies the claims of absence. You want to tell somebody something; but he or she is not, as they used to say "by," or perhaps there are circumstances (and circum*standers*) which or who make speech undesirable; so you "write." At first no doubt, you used signs or symbols like the feather with which Wildrake let Cromwell's advent be known in *Woodstock*—a most ingenious device for which, by the way, the recipients were scantly grateful. But when reading and writing came by nature, you availed yourself of these Nature's gifts, not always, it is to be feared, regarding the interconnection of the two sufficiently. There is probably more than one person living who has received a reply beginning "Dear So-and-So, Thanks for your interesting and *partially legible* epistle," or words to that effect. But that is a part of the matter which lies outside our range.

On the probable general fact, however, some observations may be less frivolously based. If this were a sentimental age, as some ages in the past have been, one might assume that, as the first portrait is supposed to have been a silhouette of the present beloved, drawn on her shadow with a charcoaled stick, so the same, or another implement may have served (on what substitute for paper anybody pleases) to communicate with her when absent. But the silliness of this age—though far be it from us to dispute its possession of so prevailing a quality—does not take the form—at least *this* form—of sentiment.

There is, moreover, nothing silly or sentimental, though of course there is something that may be controverted, in

saying that except for purely "business" purposes (which are as such alien from Art and have nothing to do with any but a part, and a rather sophisticated part, of Nature) the less the letter-writer forgets that he is merely substituting pen for tongue the better. Of course, the instruments and the circumstances being different, the methods and canons of the proceedings will be different too. In the letter there is no interlocutor; and there is no possibility of what we may call accompanying it with personal illustrations[1] and demonstrations, if necessary or agreeable. But still it may be laid down, with some confidence, that the more the spoken word is heard in a letter the better, and the less that word is heard—the more it gives way to "book"-talk—the worse. Indeed this is not likely to be denied, though there remain as usual almost infinite possibilities of differences in personal opinion as to what constitutes the desirable mixture of variation and similarity between a conversation and a letter. Let us, before discussing this or saying anything more about the principles, say something about the history of this, at best so delightful, at worst so undelightful art. For if History, in the transferred sense of particular books called "histories," is rather apt to be false: nothing but History in the wider and higher sense will ever lead us to truth. The Future is unknown and unknowable. The Present is turning to Past even as we are trying to know it. Only the Past itself abides our knowledge.

Of the oldest existing examples of epistolary correspondence, except those contained in the Bible, the present

[1] It may of course be "illustrated" in the other sense by a second use of the pen; and we shall have instances of this kind to notice.

writer knows little or nothing. For, except a vanished smattering of Hebrew, he " has " no Oriental tongue ; he has never been much addicted to reading translations, and even if he had been so has had little occasion to draw him to such studies, and much to draw him away from them. There certainly appear to be some beautiful specimens of the more passionate letter writing in ancient if not exactly pre-Christian Chinese, and probably in other tongues—but it is ill talking of what one does not know. In the Scriptures themselves letters do not come early, and the " token " period probably lasted long. Isaac does not even send a token with Jacob to validate his suit for a daughter of Laban. But one would have enjoyed a letter from Ishmael to his half-brother, when his daughter was married to Esau, who was so much more like a son of Ishmael himself than of the amiable husband of Rebekah. She, by the way, had herself been fetched in an equally unlettered transaction. It would of course be impossible, and might be regarded as improper, to devote much space here to the sacred epistolographers. But one may wonder whether many people have appreciated the humour of the two epistles of the great King Ahasuerus-Artaxerxes, the first commanding and the second countermanding the massacre of the Jews—epistles contained in the Septuagint " Rest of the Book of Esther " (see our Apocrypha), instead of the mere dry summaries which had sufficed for " the Hebrew and the Chaldee." The exact authenticity of these fuller texts is a matter of no importance, but their substance, whether it was the work of a Persian civil servant or of a Greek-Jew rhetorician, is most curious. Whosoever it was, he knew King's Speeches and communications from " My lords " and such like things, very well

indeed; and the contrast of the mention in the first letter of "Aman who excelled in wisdom among us and was approved for his constant good will and steadfast fidelity" with "the wicked wretch Aman—a stranger received of us . . . his falsehood and cunning"—the whole of both letters being carefully attuned to the respective key-notes—is worthy of any one of the best ironists from Aristophanes to the late Mr. Traill.

Between these two extremes of the Pentateuch and the Apocrypha there is, as has been remarked by divers commentators, not much about letters in the Bible. It is not auspicious that among the exceptions come David's letter commanding the betrayal of Uriah, and a little later Jezebel's similar prescription for the judicial murder of Naboth. There is, however, some hint of that curious attractiveness which some have seen in "the King's daughter all glorious within—" and without (as the Higher Criticism interprets the Forty-Fifth Psalm) in the bland way with which she herself stipulates that the false witnesses shall be "sons of Belial."

There is a book (once much utilised as a school prize) entitled *The History of Inventions*. I do not know whether there is a "Dictionary of Attributed Inventors." If there were it would contain some queer examples. One of the queerest is fathered (for we only have it at second hand) on Hellanicus, a Greek writer of respectable antiquity—the Peloponnesian war-time—and respectable repute for book-making in history, chronology, etc. It attributes the invention of letters—*i.e.* "epistolary correspondence"—to Atossa—not Mr. Matthew Arnold's Persian cat but—the Persian Queen, daughter of Cyrus, wife of Cambyses and Darius, mother of Xerxes, and in more than her

queenly status a sister to Jezebel. Atossa had not a wholly amiable reputation, but she was assuredly no fool: and if, to borrow a famous phrase, it had been necessary to invent letters, there is no known reason why she might not have done it. But it is perfectly certain that she did not, and no one who combines, as all true scholars should endeavour to combine, an unquenchable curiosity to know what can be known and is worth knowing with a placid resignation to ignorance of what cannot be known and would not be worth knowing—need in the least regret the fact that we do not know who did.

There are said to be Egyptian letters of immense antiquity and high development; but once more, I do not profess direct knowledge of them, and once more I hold that of what a man does not possess direct knowledge, of that he should not write. Besides, for practical purposes, all our literature begins with Greek: so to Greek let us turn. We have a fair bulk of letters in that language. Hercher's *Epistolographi Graeci* is a big volume, and would not be a small one, if you cut out the Latin translations. But it is unfortunate that nearly the whole, like the majority of later Greek literature, is the work of that special class called rhetoricians—a class for which, though our term "book-makers" may be a little too derogatory, "men of letters" is rarely (it is sometimes) applicable, as we use it when we mean to be complimentary. These letters are still close to "speech," thus meeting in a fashion our initial requirement, but they are close to the speech of the "orator"—of the sophisticated speaker to the public—not to that of genuine conversation. In fact in some cases it would require only the very slightest change to make those exercitations of the rhetors which

are not called "epistles" definite letters in form, while some of the best known and characteristic of their works are so entitled.

It was unfortunate for the Greeks, as it would seem, and for us more certainly, that letter-writing was so much affected by these "rhetoricians." This curious class of persons has perhaps been too much abused: and there is no doubt that very great writers came out of them—to mention one only in each division—Lucian among the extremely profane, and St. Augustine among the greatest and most intellectual of divines. But though their habitual defects are to be found abundantly enough in modern society, these defects are, with us, as a rule distributed among different classes; while anciently they were united in this one. We have our journalists, our book-makers (literary, not sporting), our platform and parliamentary palaverers, our popular entertainers; and we also have our pedagogues, scholastic and collegiate, our scientific and other lecturers, etc. But the Rhetorician of old was a Jack of all these trades; and he too frequently combined the triviality, unreality, sophistry and catch-pennyism of the one division with the priggishness, the lack of tact and humour, and above all the pseudo-scientific tendency to generalisation, classification and, to use a familiar word, "pottering" of the other. In particular he had a mania in his more serious moods for defining and sub-defining things and putting them into pigeon-holes under the sub-definitions. Thus the so-called Demetrius Phalereus, who (or a false namesake of his) has left us a capital *general* remark (to be given presently) on letter-writing, elaborately divides its kinds, with prescriptions for writing each, into "friendly," "commendatory," "reproving,"

"objurgatory," "consolatory," "castigatory," "admonishing," "threatening," "vituperatory," "laudatory," "persuasive," "begging," "questioning," "answering," "allegorical," "explanatory," "accusing," "defending," "congratulatory," "ironic" and "thankful," while the neo-Platonist, Proclus, is responsible for, or at least has attributed to him, a list of nearly double the length, including most of those given above and adding many. Of these last, "love-letters" is the most important, and "mixed" the *canniest*, for it practically lets in everything.

This way, of course, except for purely business purposes—where established forms save time, trouble and possible litigation—no possible good lies; and indeed the impossibility thereof is clearly enough indicated in the above-glanced-at general remark of Demetrius (or whoever it was) himself. In fact the principle of this remark and its context in the work called "Of Interpretation," which it is more usual now to call, perhaps a little rashly, "Of Style," is so different from the catalogue of types that they can hardly come from the same author. "You *can* from this, as well as from all other kinds of writing, discern the character of the writer; indeed from none other can you discern it so well." Those who know a little of the history of Criticism will see how this anticipates the most famous and best definitions of Style itself, as being "the very man," and they may perhaps also think worthy of notice another passage in the same context where the author finds fault with a rather "fine" piece of an epistle as "not the way a man would talk to his friend," and even goes on to use the most familiar Greek word for talking—λαλεῖν—in the same connection.

Of such "talking with a friend" we have unfortunately

very few examples—hardly any at all—from older Greek. The greater collections—not much used in schools or colleges now but well enough known to those who really know Greek Literature—of Alciphron, Aristaenetus, Philostratus and (once most famous of all) Phalaris are—one must not perhaps say obvious, since men of no little worth were once taken in by them but—pretty easily discoverable counterfeits. They are sometimes, more particularly those of Philostratus, interesting and even beautiful;[1] they have been again sometimes at least supposed, particularly those of Alciphron, to give us, from the fact that they were largely based upon lost comedies, etc., information which we should otherwise lack; and in many instances (Aristaenetus is perhaps here the chief) they must have helped towards that late Greek creation of the Romance to which we owe so much. Nor have we here much if anything to do with such questions as the morality of personating dead authors, or that of laying traps for historians. It is enough that they do not give us, except very rarely, good letters: and that even these exceptions are not in any probability *real* letters, real written "confabulations of friends" at all. Almost the first we have deserving such a description are those of the Emperor Julian in the fourth century of that Christ for whom he had such an unfortunate hatred; the most copious and thoroughly genuine perhaps those of Bishop Synesius a little later. Of these Julian's are a good deal affected by the influence of Rhetoric, of which he was a great cultivator: and the peculiar later Platonism of Synesius fills a larger

[1] As has often been pointed out Ben Jonson's exquisite "Drink to me only with thine eyes" is a verse-paraphrase or mosaic from this writer's prose.

proportion of his than some frivolous persons might wish. Julian is even thought to have "written for publication," as Latin epistolers of distinction had undoubtedly done before him. Nevertheless it is pleasant to read the Apostate when he is not talking Imperial or anti-Christian "shop," but writing to his tutor, the famous sophist and rhetorician Libanius, about his travels and his books and what not, in a fashion by no means very unlike that in which a young Oxford graduate might write to an un-donnish don. It is still pleasanter to find Synesius telling his friends about the very thin wine and very thick honey of Cyrenaica; making love ("camouflaged," as they say to-day, under philosophy) to Hypatia, and condescending to mention dogs, horses and hunting now and then. But it is unfortunately undeniable that the bulk of this department of Greek literature is spurious to begin with, and uninteresting, even if spuriousness be permitted to pass. The Letters of Phalaris—once famous in themselves, again so as furnishing one of the chief battle-grounds in the "Ancient and Modern" quarrel, and never to be forgotten because of their connection with Swift's *Battle of the Books*—are as dull as ditchwater in matter, and utterly destitute of literary distinction in style.

It is a rule, general and almost universal, that every branch of Latin literature is founded on, and more or less directly imitative of Greek. Even the Satire, which the Romans relied upon to prove that they could originate, is more apparently than really an invention. Also, though this may be more disputable, because much more a matter of personal taste, there were very few such branches in which the pupils equalled, much fewer in which they sur-

passed, their masters. But in both respects letter-writing may be said to be an exception. Unless we have been singularly unlucky in losing better Greek letters than we have, and extraordinarily fortunate in Fate's selection of the Latin letters that have come down to us, the Romans, though they were eager students of Rhetoric, and almost outwent their teachers in composing the empty things called Declamations, seem to have allowed this very practice to drain off mere verbosity, and to have written letters about matters which were worth pen, ink, paper and (as we should say) postage. We have in Greek absolutely no such letters from the flourishing time of the literature as those of Cicero, of Pliny [1] and even of Seneca—while as we approach the "Dark" Ages Julian and Synesius in the older language cannot touch Sidonius Apollinaris or perhaps Cassiodorus [2] in the younger. Of course all these are beyond reasonable doubt genuine, while the Greek letters attributed to Plato, Socrates and other great men are almost without doubt and without exception spurious. But there is very little likelihood that the Greeks of the great times wrote many "matterful" letters at all. They lived in small communities, where they saw each other daily and almost hourly; they took little interest in the affairs of other communities

[1] Pliny, if he did not always "write for publication," deliberately "published," as we should say, his letters. Indeed, he is one of the first to use the word in this sense, even if he uses it immediately of an oration not a letter. Some think Cicero meant publication; and he was very likely to do so.

[2] The Latin statesman, like the Greek bishop, condescends to write about wine and even more fully. One of the most interesting and informing things on the subject is his discourse on *vinum acinaticium*, a sort of Roman Imperial Tokay made from grapes kept till the frost had touched them.

unless they were at war with them, and when they did travel there were very few means of international communication.

Women write the best letters, and get the best letters written to them: but it is doubtful whether Greek women, save persons of a certain class and other exceptions in different ways like Sappho and Diotima,[1] ever wrote at all. The Romans, after their early period, were not merely a larger and ever larger community full of the most various business, and constantly extending their presence and their sway; but, by their unique faculty of organisation, they put every part of their huge world in communication with every other part. Here also we lack women's letters; but we are, as above remarked, by no means badly off for those of men. There have even been some audacious heretics who have preferred Cicero's letters to his speeches and treatises; Seneca, the least attractive of those before mentioned, put well what the poet Wordsworth called in his own poems "extremely va*loo*able thoughts"; one of the keenest of mathematicians and best of academic and general business men known to the present writer, the late Professor Chrystal of Edinburgh, made a special favourite of Pliny; and if people can find nothing worse to say against Sidonius than that he wrote in contemporary, and not in what was for his time archaic, Latin, his case will not look bad in the eyes of sensible men.

Sidonius, like Synesius, was a Christian, and, though the

[1] Genuine letters of Sappho would have been of the first interest to compare with those of Heloise, and the "Portuguese Nun" and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse. Diotima's might have been as disappointing as George Eliot's: but by no means must necessarily have been so. Aspasia's, sometimes counterfeited, ought to have been good.

observation may seem no more logical than Fluellen's about Macedon and Monmouth, besides being in more doubtful taste, there would seem to be some connection between the spread of Christianity and that of letter-writing. At any rate they synchronise, despite or perhaps because of the deficiency of formal literature during the "Dark" Ages. It is not really futile to point out that a very large part of the New Testament consists of "Epistles," and that by no means the whole of these epistles is occupied by doctrinal or hortatory matter. Even that which is so, often if not always, partakes of the character of a "live" letter to an extent which makes the so-called letters of the Greek Rhetoricians mere school exercises. And St. Paul's allusions to his journeys, his salutations, his acknowledgment of presents, his reference to the cloak and the books with its anxious "but especially the parchments," and his excellent advice to Timothy about beverages, are all the purest and most genuine matter for mail-bags. So is St. Peter's very gentleman-like (as it has been termed) retort to his brother Apostle; and so are both the Second and the Third of St. John. Indeed it is not fanciful to suggest that the account of the voyage which finishes the "Acts," and other parts of that very delightful book, are narratives much more of the kind one finds in letters than of the formally historical sort.

However this may be, it is worth pointing out that the distrust of other pagan kinds of literature which the Fathers manifested so strongly, and which was inherited from them by the clergy of the "Dark," and to some extent the Middle Ages, clearly could not extend to the practice of the Apostles. If from the Dark Ages themselves we have not very many, it must be remembered

that from them we have little literature at all: while from the close of that period and the beginning of the next we have one of the most famous of all correspondences, the Letters of Abelard and Heloise. Of the intrinsic merit of these long- and far-famed compositions, as displaying character, there have been different opinions—one of the most damaging attacks on them may be found in Barbey d'Aurevilly's already mentioned book. But their influence has been lasting and enormous: and even if it were to turn out that they are forgeries, they are certainly early forgeries; and the person who forged them knew extremely well what he was about. There is no room here to survey, even in selection, the letter-crop of the Middle Ages; and from henceforward we must speak mainly, if not wholly (for some glances abroad may be permitted), of *English* letters.[1] But the ever-increasing bonds of union—even of such union in disunion as war—between different European nations, and the developments of more complex civilisation, of more general education and the like—all tended and wrought in the same direction.

[1] It is part of the plan to give, as a sort of Appendix to the Introduction, and extension of it towards the main body of text, some specimens of Greek, Roman (classical and post-classical) and Early Mediaeval letter-writing, translated for the purpose by the present writer. The *continuity* of literary history is a thing which deserves to be attended to, especially when there is an ever-growing tendency to confine attention to things modern—albeit so soon to be antiquated! I owe the last of these specimens, in the Latin from which I translate it, to the kindness of my friend the Rev. W. Hunt, D.Litt., to whom I had recourse as not myself having access to a large library at the moment, and who has assisted me in other parts of this book.

II

LETTERS IN ENGLISH—BEFORE 1700

Exceptions have sometimes been taken to the earliest collection of genuine private letters, not official communications written in or inspired by Latin—which we possess in English. "The Paston Letters" have been, from opposite sides, accused of want of literary form and of not giving us interesting enough details in substance. The objections in either case[1] are untenable, and in both rather silly. In the first place "literary form" in the fifteenth century was exceedingly likely to be bad literary form, and we are much better off without it. Unless Sir Thomas Malory had happened to be chaplain at Oxnead, or Sir John Fortescue had occupied there something like the position of Mr. Tulkinghorn in *Bleak House*, we should not have got much "literature" from any known prose-writer of the period. Nor was it wanted. As for interestingness of matter, the people who expect newspaper-correspondent fine writing about the Wars of the Roses may be disappointed; but some of us who have had experience of that dialect from the Russells of the Crimea through the Forbeses of 1870 to the chroniclers of Armageddon the other day will probably not be very unhappy.

[1] Yet others, as to authenticity, have, I believe, been rejected by all competent scholarship.

The Paston Letters are simply genuine family correspondence—of a genuineness all the more certain because of their commonplaceness. It is impossible to conceive anything further from the initial type of the Greek rhetorical "letter" of which we have just been saying something. They are not, to any but an excessively "high-browed" and high-flying person, uninteresting: but the chief point about them is their solidity and their satisfaction, in their own straightforward unvarnished way, of the test we started with. When Margaret Paston and the rest write, it is because they have something to say to somebody who cannot be actually spoken to. And that something is said.

The next body of letters—Ascham's—which seems to call for notice here is of the next century. It has not a few points of appeal, more than one of which concern us very nearly. Most of the writers of the Paston Letters were, though in some cases of good rank and fairly educated, persons entirely unacademic in character, and their society was that of the last trouble and convulsion through which the Early Middle Ages struggled into the Renaissance, so long delayed with us. Ascham was one of our chief representatives of the Renaissance itself—that is to say, of a type at once scholarly and man-of-the-worldly, a courtier and a diplomatist as well as a "don" and a man of letters; a sportsman as well as a schoolmaster. And while from all these points of view his letters have interest, there is one thing about them which is perhaps more interesting to us than any other: and that is the fact that while he begins to write in Latin—the all but mother-tongue of all scholars of the time, and the universal language of the educated, even when not definitely scholarly, throughout Europe—he exchanges this for English

latterly, in the same spirit which prompted his famous expression of reasons for writing the *Toxophilus* in our own and his own tongue. There is indeed a double attraction, which has not been always or often noticed, in this change of practice. Everybody has seen how important it is, not merely as resisting the general delusion of contemporary scholars that the vernaculars were things unsafe, "like to play the bankrupt with books," but as protesting by anticipation against the continuance of this error which affected Bacon and Hobbes, and was not entirely without hold even on such a magician in English as Browne. But perhaps everybody has not seen how by implication it acknowledges the peculiar character of the genuine letter —that, though it may be a work of art, it should not be one of artifice—that it is a matter of " business *or* bosoms," not of study or display.

Contemporary with these letters of Ascham, and going on to the end of the century and the closely coincident end of the reign of Elizabeth, we have a considerable bulk of letter-writing of more or less varied kinds. The greatest men of letters of the time—to the disgust of one, but not wholly so to that of another, class of " scholar "—give us little. Spenser is the most considerable exception : and his correspondence with Gabriel Harvey, though it is personal to a certain extent and on Gabriel's side sufficiently character-revealing, is really of the hybrid kind, partaking rather more of pamphlet or essay than of letter proper. Indeed a good part of that very remarkable pamphlet-literature of this time, which has perhaps scarcely yet received its due share of attention, takes the letter-form : but is mostly even farther from genuine letter-writing than the correspondence of " Immerito "

and "Master G. H." We have of course more of Harvey's; we have laments from others, such as Lyly and Googe, about their disappointments as courtiers; we have a good deal of State correspondence. There are some, not very many, agreeable letters of strictly private character in whole or part, the pleasantest of all perhaps being some of Sir Philip Sydney's mother, Lady Mary Dudley. Others are from time to time being made public, such as those in Dr. Williamson's recent book on the Admiral-Earl of Cumberland. As far as mere bulk goes, Elizabethan epistolography would take no small place, just as it would claim no mean one in point of interest. But in an even greater degree than its successor (*v. inf.*) this *corpus* would expose itself to the criticism that the time for perfect letter-writing was not quite yet, in this day of so much that was perfect, that the style was not quite the right style, the knack not yet quite achieved. And if the present writer—who swore fealty to Elizabethan literature a full third of a century ago after informal allegiance for nearly as long a time earlier—admits some truth in this, there probably is some. The letters included in it attract us more for the matter they contain than for the manner in which they contain it: and when this is the case no branch of literature has perfected itself in art.

The position of the seventeenth century in England with regard to letter-writing has been the subject of rather different opinions. The bulk of its contributions is of course very considerable: and some of the groups are of prominent importance, the most singular, if not the most excellent, being Cromwell's, again to be mentioned. As in other cases and departments this century offers a curious "split" between its earlier part which declines—

not in goodness but like human life in vitality—from, but still preserves the character of, the pure Elizabethan, and its later, which grows up again—not in goodness but simply in the same vitality—towards the Augustan. This relationship is sufficiently illustrated in the actual letters. The great political importance of the Civil War of course reflects itself in them. Indeed it may almost be said that for some time letters are wholly concerned with such things, though of course there are partial exceptions, such as those of Dorothy Osborne—"mild Dorothea" as she afterwards became, though there is no mere mildness of the contemptuous meaning in her correspondence. In most remarkable contrast to these stand the somewhat earlier letters of James Howell—our first examples perhaps of letters "written for publication" in the fullest sense, very agreeably varied in subject and great favourites with a good many people, notably Thackeray—but only in part (if at all) genuine private correspondence.

Not a few men otherwise distinguished in literature wrote letters—sometimes in curious contrast with other productions of theirs. The most remarkable instance of this, but an instance easily comprehensible, is that of Samuel Pepys. Only a part of Pepys' immense correspondence has ever been printed, but there is no reason to expect from the remainder—whether actually extant, mislaid or lost—anything better than the examples which are now accessible, and which are for the most part the very opposite in every respect of the famous and delectable Diary. They are perfectly "proper," and for the most part extremely dull; while propriety is certainly not the most salient characteristic of the Diary; and the diarist manages, in the most eccentric manner, to communicate

interest not merely to things more specially regarded as "interesting," but to his accounts and his ailments, his business and his political history. His contemporary and rather patronising friend Evelyn keeps his performances less far apart from each other: but is certainly, though a representative, not a great letter-writer, and the few that we have of Pepys' patronised fellow-Cantabrigian Dryden are of no great mark, though not superfluous. In the earlier part of the century Latin had not wholly shaken off its control as the epistolary language; and it was not till quite the other end that English itself became supple and docile enough for the purposes of the letter-writer proper. It was excellent for such things as formal Dedications, semi-historical narratives, and the like. And it could, as in Sir Thomas Browne's, supply another contrast, much more pleasing than that referred to above, of domestic familiarity with a most poetical transcendence of style in published work. Yet, as was the case with the novel, the letter, to gain perfection, still wanted something easier than the grand style of the seventeenth century and more polished than its familiar style.

III

THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

But whatever may be the position of the seventeenth in respect of letter-writing it is impossible for anything but sheer ignorance, hopeless want of critical discernment, or idle paradox to mistake, in the direction of belittlement, that of the eighteenth. By common consent of all opinion worth attention that century was, in the two European literatures which were equally free from crudity and decadence—French and English—the very palmiest day of the art. Everybody wrote letters: and a surprising number of people wrote letters well. Our own three most famous epistolers of the male sex, Horace Walpole, Gray and Cowper—belong wholly to it; and "Lady Mary"—our most famous she-ditto—belongs to it by all but her childhood; as does Chesterfield, whom some not bad judges would put not far if at all below the three men just mentioned. The rise of the novel in this century is hardly more remarkable than the way in which that novel almost wedded itself—certainly joined itself in the most frequent friendship—to the letter-form. But perhaps the excellence of the choicer examples in this time is not really more important than the abundance, variety and popularity of its letters, whether good, indifferent, or bad. To use one of the informal superlatives sanctioned by familiar custom

it was the "letterwritingest" of ages from almost every point of view. In its least as in its most dignified moods it even overflowed into verse if not into poetry as a medium. Serious epistles had—of course on classical models—been written in verse for a long time. But now in England more modern patterns, and especially Anstey's *New Bath Guide*, started the fashion of actual correspondence in doggerel verse with no thought of print—a practice in which persons as different as Madame d'Arblay's good-natured but rather foolish father, and a poet and historian like Southey indulged; and which did not become obsolete till Victorian times, if then. At the present moment one does not remember an exact equivalent in England to the story of two good writers in French if not French writers[1] living in the same house, meeting constantly during the day, yet exchanging letters, and not short ones, before breakfast. But very likely there is or was one, and more than one.

For those no doubt estimable persons who are not content with facts but must have some explanations of them, it is less difficult to supply such things than is sometimes the case. One—the attainment at last of a "middle" style neither grand nor vulgar—has already been glanced at. It has been often and quite truly observed that there are sentences, passages, paragraphs, almost whole letters in Horace Walpole and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, in Fanny Burney and in Cowper, which no one would think old-fashioned at the present day in any context where modern slang did not suggest itself as natural. But this was by no means the only predisposing cause, though perhaps most of the others were, in this way or that, connected with it. Both in France and in

[1] Benjamin Constant and Madame de Charrière.

England literature and social matters generally were in something like what political economists call "the stationary state" till (as rather frequently happens with such apparently stationary states) the smoothness changed to the Niagara of the French Revolution, and the rapids of the quarter-century War. There were no great poets:[1] and even verse-writers were rarely grand: but there was a greater diffusion of competent writing faculty than had been seen before or perhaps—for all the time, talk, trouble, and money spent on "education,"—has been since. New divisions and departments of interest were accumulating —not merely in Literature itself[2] (as to which, if people's ideas were rather limited, they *had* ideas), but in the arts which were in some cases practised almost for the first time and in all taken more seriously, in foreign and home politics, commerce, manufactures, all manner of things. People were by no means so apt to stay in the same place as they had been: and when friends were in different places they had much easier means of communicating with each other. Nor should it be forgotten that the more elaborate system of ceremonial manners which then prevailed, but which has been at first gradually, and latterly with a run, breaking down for the last hundred years, had an important influence on letter-writing. One does not of course refer merely to elaborate formulas of beginning and ending—such as make even the greatest praisers of times past among us smile a little when they find

[1] Some of us think Blake a great poet; but this is scarcely a general opinion, and he does not appear till the century was three parts over. Burns (whose own letters by the way do him little justice) hardly comes in.

[2] Especially the most popular and voluminous if not the most important of all—the periodical and the novel.

Dr. Johnson addressing his own step-daughter as "Dear Madam," and being her "most humble servant" though in the course of the letter he may use the most affectionate and intimate expressions. But the manners of yester-year made it obligatory to make your letters—unless they were merely what were called "cards" of invitation, message, etc.—to some extent *substantive*. You gave the news of the day, if your correspondent was not likely to know it; the news of the place, especially if you were living in a University town or a Cathedral city. If you had read a book you very often criticised it: if you had been to any kind of entertainment you reported on it, etc. etc. Of course all this is still done by people who really do write real letters: but it is certainly done by a much smaller proportion of letter-writers than was the case two hundred, one hundred, or even fifty years ago. The newspaper has probably done more to kill letters than any penny post, halfpenny postcard or even sixpenny telegram could do. Nor perhaps have we yet mentioned the most powerful destructive agent of all, and that is the ever increasing want of leisure. The dulness of modern Jack, in letters as elsewhere, arises from the fact that when he is not at work he is too desperately set on playing to have time for anything else. The Augustans are not usually thought God-like: but they have this of Gods, that they "lived *easily*."

There is perhaps still something to be said as to the apparently almost pre-established harmony between the eighteenth century and letter-writing. It concerns what has been called the "*Peace* of the Augustans"; the at least comparative freedom alike from the turmoil of passion and the most riotous kinds of fun. Tragedy may

be very fine in letters, as it may be anywhere: but it is in them the most dangerous,[1] most rarely successful and most frequently failed-in of all motives—again as it is everywhere. Comedy in letters is good: but it should be fairly "genteel" comedy, such as this age excelled in—not roaring Farce. An "excruciatingly funny" letter runs the risk of being excruciating in a sadly literal sense. Now the men of good Queen Anne and the first three Georges were not given to excess, in these ways at any rate; and there are few better examples of the happy mean than the best of their letters. The person who is bored by any one of those sets which have been mentioned must bring the boredom with him—as, by the way, complainers of that state of suffering do much oftener than they wot of. Nor is much less to be said of scores of less famous epistolers of the time, from the generation of Berkeley and Byrom to that of Scott and Southey.

To begin with Swift, it is a scarcely disputable fact that opinions about this giant of English literature—not merely as to his personal character, though perhaps this has had more to do with the matter than appears on the surface, but as to his exact literary value—have differed almost incomprehensibly. Johnson thought, or at least affected to think, that *A Tale of a Tub* could not be Swift's, because it was too good for him, and that "Tom Davies might have written *The Conduct of the Allies*": while on the other hand Thackeray, indulging in the most extravagant denunciation of Swift as a man, did the very fullest,

[1] The danger being of many sorts—usually in the direction of various kinds of *excess*. A *quietly* tragic letter may be a masterpiece: perhaps there is no finer example than one to be again referred to, of Mrs. Carlyle's.

though not in the least too full, homage to his genius. But one does not know many things more surprising in the long list of contradictory criticisms of man and genius alike, than Mr. Herbert Paul's disapproval of the *Journal to Stella* as letters while admitting its excellence as "narrative."[1] To other judges these are some of the most perfect letters in existence, some of the most absolutely genuine and free from the slightest taint of writing for publication; some of the most extraordinarily blended of intense intimacy which is neither ridiculous nor productive of the shame-faced feeling that you ought not to have heard it; and full of that dealing with matters less intimate but still interesting to both correspondents which displays the "narrative" excellence conceded by this acute critic. It must of course be remembered that these "Journal-letters" are by no means Swift's only proofs of his epistolary expertness. The Vanessa ones perhaps display a little of the hopelessly enigmatic character which spreads like a mist over the whole of that ill-starred relationship: but they make all the more useful contrast to the "wholeheartedness"—one may even use that word in reference to the little bit of what we may call constructive deception as to "the other person"—of those to her rival.[2] Those to Pope (of which so shabby a use was

[1] Mr. Paul thinks that "the baby language" is terribly out of character, and that there is "too much of it"; that Swift "would try to make love though he did not know what love meant"; and that the whole rings hollow and insincere. Others, women as well as men, have held that the "little language" is only less pathetic than it is charming; that Swift was one of the greatest, if one of the unhappiest lovers of the world; and that the thing is as sincere as if it had been written in the Palace of Truth and only hollow as is the space between Heaven and Hell.

[2] It should never be, but perhaps sometimes is, forgotten

made by their strangely constituted recipient), to Bolingbroke and others are among the best of friendly letters: and the curious batch to the Duchess of Queensberry might be classed with those "court-paying" letters of man to woman which are elsewhere more particularly noted. But the "Stella" or "Stella-cum-Dingley" division (if that most singular of value-completing zeros is to be brought in) is a thing by itself. Perhaps appreciating or not appreciating the "little language" is a matter very largely of personal constitution, and the failure to appreciate is (like colour-blindness or other physical deficiencies) a thing to be sorry for, not to condemn. But one might have thought that even if what we may call "feeling" of this were absent there would be an intellectual understanding of the way in which it completes the whole-heartedness just mentioned—the manner in which the writer deals with politics, society, letters, the common ways of life, and his own passion—this last sometimes in the fore- sometimes in the background, but never far off. Other letters, from Horace Walpole's downwards, may contain a panorama of life as brilliant as these give, or more brilliant. Yet it is too frequently a panorama or a puppet show, or at the best a marvellously acted but somewhat bloodless drama. On the other hand, the pure passion-letters lack as a rule this many-sidedness. With Swift we get both. Seldom has any collection shown us more varied interests. But through it all there is an

that "Stella" was a lady of unusual wits, and of what Swift's greatest decrier called in his own protegée Mrs. Williams "universal curiosity," that is to say not "inquisitiveness" but "intelligent interest." The politics etc. are not mere selfish attention to what interests the writer only.

anticipation of the knell of this commerce of his—" Only a woman's hair "—and that hair threads, in subtle fashion, the whole of the Journal, turning the panorama to something felt as well as seen, and the puppet-show to realities of flesh and blood.

That this magical transforming element is wanting in a most remarkable pair of contemporaries, Chesterfield and " Lady Mary," has been generally allowed; though a strong fight has been made by some of her sisters for " my lady " and though the soundest criticism allows that " my lord " did not so much lack as dissemble heart and even sometimes showed the heart he had. It would be out of our proper line to discuss such questions here at any length. It may be enough to warn readers who have not yet had time to look into the matter for themselves that Pope's coarse attacks on Lady Mary and Johnson's fine rhetorical rebuff of Chesterfield were unquestionably outbursts of hurt personal pride. Horace Walpole made hits at both for reasons which we may call personal at second-hand, because the one was a friend of his sister-in-law and the other an enemy of his father. As for Dickens' caricature of " Sir John Chester " in *Barnaby Rudge* it is not so much a caricature as a sheer and inexcusable libel. Anyhow, the letters of the Earl and the Lady are exceedingly good reading. Persons of no advanced years who have been introduced to them in the twentieth century have been known to find them positively captivating: and their attractions are, not merely as between the two but even in each case by itself, singularly various. Lady Mary's forte—perhaps in direct following of her great forerunner and part namesake, Marie de Sévigné, though she spoke inadvisedly of her—

lies in description of places and manners, and in literary criticism.[1] Her accounts of her Turkish journey in earlier days, and of some scenes in Italy later, of her court and other experiences, etc., rank among the best things of the kind in English; and her critical acuteness, assisted as it was by no small possession of what might almost be called scholarship, was most remarkable for her time. Also, she does all these things naturally—with that naturalness at which—when they possess it at all—women are so much better than men. People say a lady can never pass a glass without looking at herself. (One thinks by the way one has seen men do that.) But after all what the glass gives is a reflection and record of nature: and women learn to see it in others as well as in themselves.

Few English writers have suffered more injustice in popular estimation than Chesterfield. Even putting aside the abuse by which, as above mentioned, Johnson showed (on Fluellen's principles convincingly) that he had more in common with the Goddess Juno than the J in both their names—that is to say an *insanabile vulnus* of vanity—there remain sources of mistakes and prejudice which have been all too freely tapped. The miscellaneous letters—which show sides of him quite different from those most in evidence throughout the "Letters to his Son"—are rarely read: these latter have been, at least once and probably oftener, made into a schoolbook for translation into other languages—an office by no means likely to conciliate affection. And even when they are not suspected of positive immorality there is a too general idea

[1] It must not be forgotten that she was Fielding's cousin. And after the remark above on Swift it is pleasant and may be fair to say that Mr. Paul is a hearty "Marian."

that they are frivolously and trivially didactic—the sort of thing that Mr. Turveydrop the elder might have written on Deportment—if he had had brains enough. Yet again, unbiassed appreciation of them has been hampered by all sorts of idle controversies as to the kind of man that young Stanhope actually turned out to be—a point of merely gossiping importance in any case, and, whatever be the facts of this one, having no more to do with the merit of the letters than the other fact that some people make mistakes in their accounts after having learnt the multiplication table has to do with the value of that composition. As a matter of relevant fact the letters—except (and even here the accusations against them are much exaggerated) from the point of view of very severe morality in regard to one or two points—perhaps no more than one —are full of sound advice, clear common-sense, and ripe experience of the world. The manners they recommend are not those of any but a very exceptional "dancing master," they are those of a gentleman. The temper that they inculcate and that they exhibit in the inculcator is positively kindly and relatively correct. Both these and the other batch of "Letters to his Godson" and successor in the Earldom (the Lord Chesterfield for forging whose name Dr. Dodd was hanged) show the most curious and unusual pains on the part of a man admitted to be in the highest degree a man of the world, and sometimes accused of being nothing else, to make himself intelligible and agreeable to young—at first very young—boys. In his letters to older folk, both men and women, qualities for which there was no room in the others arise—the thoughts of a statesman and a philosopher, the feelings of a being quite different from the callous, frivolous, sometimes

"insolent"[1] worldling who has been so often put in the place of the real Chesterfield. And independently of all this there is present in all these letters—though most attractively in those to his son—a power of literary expression which would have made the fortune of any professional writer of the time. If Chesterfield's literary taste was too often decided by the fashionable limitations of this time, it was, within those limitations, accomplished: and it was accompanied, as mere taste very often is not, by no small command of literary production. He could and did write admirable light verse; his wit in conversation is attested in the most final fashion by his enemy Horace Walpole, and some of the passages in the letters where he indulges in description or even dialogue are by no means unworthy of the best genteel comedy of the time. But he could also, as was said of someone else, be "nobly serious," as in his "character" writing and elsewhere. His few contributions to the half-developed periodical literature of his day show how valuable he would have been to the more advanced Review or Magazine of the nineteenth century: and if he had chosen to write Memoirs they would probably have been among the best in English.[2] Now the Memoir and the Letter are perhaps the most straitly and intimately connected forms of literature.

Horace Walpole—like his two contemporaries, fellow-members of English aristocratic society, acquaintances

[1] Johnson is again the chief and by no means trustworthy witness for this "insolence." But in the same breath he admitted that Chesterfield was "dignified." Now dignity is almost as doubtfully compatible with insolence as with impudence.

[2] It is difficult to think of anyone who has combined statesmanship (Chesterfield's accomplishments in which are constantly forgotten), social gifts and literary skill in an equal degree

and objects of aversion just discussed—has been the subject of very various opinions. Johnson (of whom he himself spoke with ignorant contempt and who did not know his letters, but did know some of his now half-forgotten published works) dismissed him with good-natured belittlement. Macaulay made him the subject of some of the most unfortunately exaggerated of those antitheses of blame and praise which, in the long run, have done the writer more harm than his subjects. To take one example less likely to be known to English readers, the wayward and prejudiced, but often very acute French critic already mentioned, Barbey d'Aurevilly, though he admits Horace's *esprit* pronounces it *un fruit brillant, amer, et glacé*. There are undoubtedly many things to be said against him as a man—if you take the "Letters-a-telltale-of-character" view, especially so. He was certainly spiteful, and he had the particularly awkward—though from one point of view not wholly unamiable—peculiarity of being what may be called spiteful at second hand. To stand up for your friends at the proper time and in the proper place is the duty, and should be the pleasure, of every gentleman. But to bite and for the most part, if not almost always, to *back*-bite your friends' supposed enemies—often when they have done nothing adverse to those friends on the particular occasion—is the act at the best of an intempestively officious person, at the worst of a cur. And Horace was always doing this in regard to all sorts of people—his abuse of Johnson himself, of Chesterfield and Lady Mary, of Fielding and others, having no personal excuse or reason whatsoever.

His taste in collecting, building, etc., is not a matter in which men of other times should be too ready to throw

stones, for taste in all such matters at almost all times, however sure a stronghold it may seem to those who occupy it, is the most brittle of glass-houses to others. He had also a considerable touch of almost original genius in important kinds of literature, as *The Mysterious Mother* and *The Castle of Otranto* showed—a touch which undoubtedly helped him in his letters. But of critical power he had nothing at all; and his knowledge (save, perhaps in Art) was anything but extensive and still less accurate. Politically he was a mere baby, all the eighty years of his life; though he passed many of them in the House of Commons and might have passed several in the House of Lords, had he chosen to attend it. When he was young he was a theoretical republican rejoicing in the execution of Charles I.: when he was old the French Revolution was to him anathema and he was horrified at the execution of Louis XVI. He was incapable of sustaining, perhaps of understanding, an argument: everything with him was a matter, as the defamers of women say it is with them, of personal and arbitrary fancy, prejudice, or whim.

But all this does not prevent him from being one of the best letter-writers in the English language: and if you take bulk of work along with variety of subject; maintenance of interest and craftsmanship as well as bulk, perhaps the very best of all. The latest standard edition of his letters, to which additions are still being made, is in sixteen well-filled volumes, and there are probably few readers of good taste and fair knowledge who would object if it could be extended to sixty. There is perhaps no body of epistles except Madame de Sévigné's own—which Horace fervently admired and, assisted perhaps by the feminine element in his own nature, copied assiduously—

exhibiting the possible charm of letter-writing more distinctly or more copiously.

To examine the nature of this charm a little cannot be irrelevant in such an Introduction as this: and from what has just been said it would seem that these letters will form as good a specimen for examination as any. They are not very much "mannerised": indeed, nobody but Thackeray, in the wonderful chapter of *The Virginians* where Horace is made to describe his first interview with one of the heroes, has ever quite imitated them. Their style, though recognisable at once, is not a matter so much of phrase as of attitude. His revelations of character—his own that is to say, for Horace was no conjuror with any one else's—are constant but not deeply drawn. He cannot, or at least does not, give a plot of any kind: every letter is a sort of *review* of the subject—larger or smaller—from the really masterly accounts of the trial of the Jacobite Lords after the "Forty-five" to the most trivial notices of people going to see "Strawberry"; of remarkable hands at cards; of Patty Blount (Pope's Patty) in her autumn years passing his windows with her gown tucked up because of the rain. Art and letters appear; travelling and visiting; friendship and society; curious belated love-making with the Miss Berrys; scandal (a great deal of it); charity (a little, but more than the popular conception of Horace allows for); the court-calendar, club life, almost all manner of things except religion (though it is said Horace had an early touch of Methodism) and really serious thought of any kind, form the budget of his letter-bag. And it is all handled with the most unexpected equality of success. There is of course nothing very "arresting." Cooking

chickens in a sort of picnic with madcap ladies, and expecting "the dish to fly about our ears" is perhaps the most exciting incident[1] of the sixteen volumes and seven or eight thousand pages. But everywhere there is interest; and that of a kind that does not stale itself.

The fact would seem to be that the art of letter-writing is a sort of mosaic or macédoine of nearly all departments of the general Art of Literature. You want constant touches of the art narrative, and not very seldom some of the art dramatic. Always you want that of conversation—subtly differentiated. Occasionally, though in the ordinary letter not very often, you want argument: much oftener description. Pathos, tenderness, etc., are more exceptionally required: and it is, in modern times at least, generally accepted that in the letter consolatory, that almost greatest of Shakespearian magic phrases, "the rest is silence" should never be forgotten and very quickly applied. Wit is welcome, if it be well managed: but that is a pretty constant proviso in regard to the particular element. Perhaps the greatest negative caution of all is that the letter should not be *obviously* "written for publication."

Now the curious thing about Walpole is that his letters were, pretty certainly in some cases (those to Mann) and not improbably in nearly all, written with some view to publication if only of a limited sort, and yet that the intention is rarely prominent to an offensive degree. Even if we did not know the curious and disgusting tricks that Pope played with his, we should be certain that he was always thinking of the possibility of somebody else than

[1] Excluding of course purely historical and public things like the trials of the '45 and the riots of '80.

the reader to whom they were addressed reading them. With nearly an equal presumption as to the fact in the case of Horace (though to do him justice he did not indulge in any ignoble tricks with them) this fact rarely occurs and never offends. An unkind critic with a turn for rather obvious epigram might say that the man's nature was so artificial that his artifice seems natural. If so, all the more credit to him as an artificer. And another feather in his cap is that, although you can hardly ever mistake the writer, his letters take a slight but sufficient colour of difference according to the personality of the recipient. He does not write to Montagu exactly as he writes to Mann; to Gray as to Mason; to Lady Upper-Ossory as to earlier she-correspondents. So once more, though there are large and important possible subjects for letters on which "Horry" does not write at all, it is questionable whether, everything being counted in that he has, and no unfair offsets allowed for what he does not attempt, we have in English any superior to him as a letter-writer.

The case of another famous eighteenth-century epistoler —Walpole's schoolfellow and except for the time of a quarrel (the blame of which Horace rather generously took upon himself but in which there were doubtless faults on both sides) [1] life-long friend—is curiously different. Gray was a poet, while Walpole, save for a touch of fantastic imagination, had nothing of poetry in him and could not,

[1] They were travelling together (always rather a test of friendship) in Italy, and Horace, as he confesses, no doubt gave himself airs. But it is pretty certain that Gray had not at this time, if he ever had, that fortunate combination of good (or at least well-commanded) temper and good breeding which enables a gentleman to meet such conduct with conduct on his own side as free from petulant "touchiness" as from ignoble parasitism.

as some who are not poets can, even appreciate it. In more than one other intellectual gift he soared above Horace. He was essentially a scholar, while his friend was as essentially a sciolist. He even combined the scientific with the literary temperament to a considerable extent: and thus was enabled to display an orderliness of thought by no means universal in men of letters, and (at least according to common estimation) positively rare in poets. His tastes were as various as his friend's: but instead of being a mere bundle of casual likings and dis-likings, they were aesthetically conceived and connected. He was not exactly an amiable person: indeed, though there was less spitefulness in him than in Horace there was, perhaps, more positive "bad blood." As for the feature in his character, or at least conduct, that impressed itself so much on Mr. Matthew Arnold—that he "never spoke out"—it might be thought, if it really existed, to have been rather fatal to letter-writing, in which a sense of constraint and "keeping back" is one of the very last things to be desired. And some of the positive characteristics and accomplishments above enumerated (not the poetry—poets have usually been good epistolers) might not seem much more suitable.

As a matter of fact, however, Gray *is* a good letter-writer—a very good letter-writer indeed. His letters, as might be expected from what has been said, carry much heavier metal than Horace's; but in another sense they are not in the least heavy. They are very much less in bulk than those of the longer lived and more "scriblative" though hardly more leisured writer:[1] and—as not

[1] Gray was not, like Walpole, a richly endowed sinecurist. But to use a familiar "bull" he seems never to have had anything

a defect but a consequence of the quality just attributed to them—they do not quite carry the reader along with them in that singular fashion which distinguishes the others. But no one save a dunce can find them dull: and their variety is astonishing when one remembers that the writer was, for great part of his life, a kind of recluse. He touches almost everything except love (one wonders whether there were any unpublished, and feels pretty sure that there must have been some unwritten, letters to Miss Speed which would have filled the gap) and with a result of artistic success even more decided than that assigned to Goldsmith's versatility by Gray's enemy or at least "incompatible" Johnson.[1] His letters of travel are admirable: his accounts of public affairs, though sometimes extremely prejudiced, very clever; those of University society and squabbles among the very best that we have in English; those touching "the picturesque" extremely early and remarkably clear-sighted; those touching literature among the least one-sided of their time. If there are, as observed or hinted above, some unamiable touches, his persistent protection of the poor creature Mason; his general attitude to his friends the Whartons; and his communications with younger men like Norton Nicholls and Bonstetten, go far to remove, or, at least, to counterbalance, the impression.

This last division indeed, and the letters to Mason,

to do, and never to have done it when he had. His poems are a mere handful; his excellent *Metrum* is a fragment; and as Professor of History at Cambridge he never did anything at all.

[1] They do not seem to have known each other personally. But (for reasons not difficult to assign but here irrelevant) Johnson was on the whole, though not wholly, unjust to Gray, and Gray seems to have disliked and spoken rudely of Johnson.

emphasize what is evident enough in almost all, a freedom on his part (which from some things in his character and history we might not altogether have expected) from a fault than which hardly any is more disagreeable in letters. This is the manifestation of what is called, in various more or less familiar terms, "giving oneself airs," "side," "patronising," etc. He may sometimes come near this pitfall of "intellectuals," but he never quite slips into it, being probably preserved by that sense of humour which he certainly possessed, though he seldom gave vent to it in verse and not very often in prose. Taking them altogether, Gray's letters may be said to have few superiors in the combination of intellectual weight and force with "pastime" interest. To some of course they may be chiefly or additionally interesting because of such light as they throw or withhold on a rather problematic character, but this, like the allegory in Spenser according to Hazlitt, "won't bite" anyone who lets it alone. They are extremely good letters to read: and the more points of interest they provide for any reader the better for that reader himself. Once more too, they illustrate the principle laid down at the beginning of this paper. They are good letters because they are, with the usual subtle difference necessary, like very good talk, recorded.[1]

Nor is there any more doubt about the qualifications of the fifth of our selected eighteenth-century letter-writers. Cowper's poetry has gone through not very strongly marked but rather curious variations of critical estimate.

[1] The varieties of what may be called literary *exercise* which have been utilised for educational or recreative purposes, are almost innumerable. Has anyone ever tried "breaking up" a letter (such as those to be given hereafter) into a conversation by interlarded comment, questions, etc.?

Like all transition writers he was a little too much in front of the prevailing taste of his own time, and a little too much behind that of the time immediately succeeding. There may have been a very brief period, before the great romantic poets of the early nineteenth century became known, when he "drove" young persons like Marianne Dashwood "wild": but Marianne Dashwoods and their periods succeed and do not resemble each other.[1] He had probably less hold on this time—when he had the best chance of popularity—than Crabbe, one of his own group, while he was destitute of the extraordinary appeals—which might be altogether unrecognised for a time but when felt are unmistakable—of the other two, Burns and Blake, of the poets of the seventeen-eighties. His religiosity was a doubtful "asset" as people say nowadays: and even his pathetic personal history had its awkward side. But as to his letters there has hardly at any time, since they became known, existed a difference of opinion among competent judges. There may be some unfortunates for whom they are too "mild": but we hardly reckon as arbiters of taste the people for whom even brandy is too mild unless you empty the cayenne cruet into it. Moreover the "tea-pot pieties" (as a poet-critic who ought to have known better once scornfully called them) make no importunate appearance in the bulk of the correspondence: while as regards the madness this supplies one of the most puzzling and perhaps not the least disquieting of "human documents." A reader may say—by no means in his haste, but after consideration—not

[1] As far as the accidents are concerned. The essentials vary not. Marianne is eternal, whether she faints and blushes, or jazzes and—does not blush.

merely "Where is the slightest sign of insanity in these?" but "How on earth did it happen that the writer of these *ever* went mad?" even with the assistance of Newton, and Teedon, and, one has to say, Mrs. Unwin.

For among the characteristics of Cowper's letters at their frequent and pretty voluminous best, are some that seem not merely inconsistent with insanity, but likely to be positive antidotes to and preservatives from it. There is a quiet humour—not of the fantastic kind which, as in Charles Lamb, forces us to admit the possibility of near alliance to *over*-balance of mind—but *counter*-balancing, antiseptic, *salt*. There is abundant if not exactly omnipresent common-sense; excellent manners; an almost total absence in that part of the letters which we are now considering of selfishness, and a total absence of ill-nature.[1] It is no business of ours here to embark on the problem, "What was the dram of eale" that ruined all this and more "noble substance" in Cowper? though there is not much doubt about the agency and little about the principal agents that effected the mischief. But it is quite relevant to point out that all the good things noticed are things distinctly and definitely good for letter-writing. And sometimes one cannot help regretfully wondering whether, if he—who dealt so admirably with such interests as were open to him—had had more and wider ones to deal with, *we* should not have had still more varied and still more delightful letters, and *he* would have escaped the terrible fate that fell on him. For although Cowper

[1] One unfortunate exception, the *ex-post facto* references to the split with Lady Austin, may be urged by a relentless prosecutor. But when William has to choose between Mary and Anna it will go hard but he will *have* to be unfair to one of them.

was the reverse of selfish in the ordinary sense, he was intensely self-centred, and his life gave too much opportunity for that excessive self-concentration which is the very hotbed of mental disease.

It is not a little surprising from this point of view, and it perhaps shows how imperative the letter-writing faculty is when it is possessed—that Cowper's letters are as good as they are:, while that point of view also helps us to understand why they are sometimes not so good.

Of all the floating thoughts we find
Upon the surface of the mind,

as he himself very happily sums up the subjects of letter-writing, there are few in his case which are of more unequal value than his criticisms. Cowper had more than one of the makings of a critic, and a very important critic. He was, or at any rate had been once, something of a scholar; he helped to effect and (which is not always or perhaps even often the case) helped *knowingly* to effect, one of the most epoch-making changes in English literature. But for the greater part of his life he read very little; he had little chance of anything like literary discussion with his peers; and accordingly his critical remarks are random, uncoordinated, and mostly a record of what struck him at the moment in the way of like and dislike, agreement or disagreement.

But then there is nothing that we go for to Cowper as a letter-writer so little as for things of this kind: and even things of this kind take the benefit of what Coleridge happily called—and what everybody has since wisely followed Coleridge in calling—his "divine chit-chat." As with Walpole—though with that difference of idiosyncrasy

which all the best things have from one another—it does not in the least matter what, among mundane affairs at least, Cowper was talking about. If his conversation—and some of the few *habitués* of Olney say it was—was anything like his letter-writing, it is no wonder that people sat over even breakfast for an hour to "satisfy sentiment not appetite" as they said with that slight touch of priggishness which has been visited upon them heavily, but which perhaps had more to do with their merits than more mannerless periods will allow.

And not even Walpole's show to quite the same degree, that extraordinary power of making anything interesting—of entirely transcending the subject—which belongs to the letter-writer in probably a greater measure than to any man-of-letters in the other sense, except the poet. The matter which these letters have to chronicle is often the very smallest of small beer. The price, conveyance and condition of the fish his correspondents buy for him or give him (Cowper was very fond of fish and lived, before railways, in the heart of the Midlands); one of the most uneventful of picnics; hares and hair (one of his most characteristic pieces of quietly ironic humour is a brief descant on wigs with a suggestion that fashion should decree the cutting off of people's own legs and the substitution of artificial ones); the height of chairs and candlesticks—anything will do. He remarks gravely somewhere, "What nature expressly designed me for, I have never been able to conjecture; I seem to myself so universally disqualified for the common and customary occupations and amusements of mankind." Perhaps poetry—at least poetry of the calibre of "Yardley Oak," and "The Castaway," of "Boadicea" and the "Royal

George" in one division; of "John Gilpin" in the other, may not be quite properly classed among the "common and customary occupations of mankind." But letter-writing might without great impropriety be so classed: and there cannot be the slightest doubt that Nature intended Cowper for a letter-writer. Whether he writes "The passages and events of the day as well as of the night are little better than dreams" or "An almost general cessation of egg-laying among the hens has made it impossible for Mrs. Unwin to enterprise a cake" one has (but perhaps a little more vividly) that agreeable sensation which at one time visited Tennyson's Northern Farmer. One "thinks he's said what he ought to 'a said" in the exact manner in which he ought to have said it.

It is however most important to remember that these Five are only, as it were, commanding officers of the great Army, representative of the very numerous constituents, who do the service and enjoy the franchise of letter-writing in the eighteenth century. There is hardly a writer of distinction in any other kind whose letters are not noteworthy; and there are very numerous letter-writers of interest who are scarcely distinguished in any other way. Perhaps Fielding disappoints us most in this section by the absence of correspondence, all the more so that the "Voyage to Lisbon" is practically letter-stuff of the best. From Smollett also we might have more—especially more like his letter to Wilkes on the subject of the supposed impressment of Johnson's negro servant Frank, which we hope to give here. Sterne's character would certainly be better if his astonishing daughter had suppressed some of his epistles, but it would be much less distinct, and they are often, if sometimes discreditably so, amusing if not

edifying. The vast mass of Richardson's correspondence would correspond in another sense to the volume of his novels. We have letters from Berkeley at the beginning and others from Gibbon at the end—these last peculiarly valuable because, as sometimes but not perhaps very often happens, they do not merely illustrate but supplement and complete the published work. From ladies, courtly, domestic, literary and others, we have shelves—and cases—and almost libraries full; from the lively chat of the Lepels and Bellendens and Howards of the early Georgian time to those copious and unstudied but never dull, compositions which Fanny Burney poured forth to "Susan and Fredy," to Maria Allen and to "Daddy Crisp" and a score of others; those of the Montagu circle; the documents upon which some have based aspersion and others defence of Mrs. Thrale; and the prose utterances of the "Swan of Lichfield," otherwise Miss Seward.[1] There are Shenstone's letters for samples of one kind and those of the Revd. Mr. Warner (the supposed original of Thackeray's Parson Sampson) for another and very different one. Even outside the proper and real "mail-bag" letter all sorts of writings—travels, pamphlets, philosophical and theological arguments, almost everything—throw themselves into the letter form. To come back to that with which we began there is no doubt that the eighteenth century is the century of the letter with us.

[1] This "swan's" utterances in poetry were quite unlike those of Tennyson's dying bird: and her taste in it was appalling. She tells Scott that the Border Ballads were totally destitute of any right to the name.

IV

NINETEENTH CENTURY LETTERS. EARLY

There is, however, not the slightest intention of suggesting here that the art of letter-writing died with the century in which it flourished so greatly. In the first place, periods of literary art seldom or never " die " in a moment like a tropical sunset; and, in the second, the notion that centennial years necessarily divide such periods, as well as the centuries in which they appear, is an unhistorical delusion. There have been dates in our history—1400 was one of them—where something of the kind seems to have happened: but they are very rare. Most ships of literature at such times are fortunately what is called in actual ships " clinker-built "—that is to say overlappingly—and except at 1600 this has never been so much the case as two hundred years later and one hundred ago. When the eighteenth century closed, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott and Southey were men approaching more or less closely, thirty years of age. Landor, Hazlitt, Lamb and Moore were at least, and some of them well, past the conventional " coming of age "; De Quincey, Byron and Shelley were boys and even Keats was more than an infant. In the first mentioned of these groups there was still very marked eighteenth-century idiosyncrasy; in the second some; and it was by no means absent from Byron though hardly

present at all in most respects as regards Shelley and Keats. Certainly in none of the groups, and only in one or two individuals, is there much if any shortcoming as concerns letter-writing. Wordsworth indeed makes no figure as a letter-writer, and nobody who has appreciated his other work would expect him to do so. The first requisite of the letter-writer is " freedom "—in a rather peculiar sense of that word, closest to the way in which it has been employed by some religious sects. Wordsworth could *preach*—nearly always in a manner deserving respect and sometimes, in one commanding almost infinite admiration; but when the letter-writer begins to preach he is in danger of the waste-paper basket or the fire. Coleridge's letters are fairly numerous and sometimes very good: but more than one of his weaknesses appears in them.

The excellence of Scott's, though always discoverable in Lockhart, was perhaps never easily appreciable till they were separately collected and published not very many years ago. It may indeed be suggested that the " Life and Letters " system, though very valuable as regards the " Life " is apt a little to obscure the excellence of the " Letters " themselves. Of this particular collection it is not too much to say that while it threw not the least stain on the character of one of the most faultless (one singular and heavily punished lapse excepted) of men of letters, it positively enhanced our knowledge of the variety of his literary powers.

Perhaps however the best of letter-writers amongst these four protagonists of the great Romantic Revival in England (the inevitable attempt sometimes made now to quarrel with that term is as inevitably silly) is the least good poet. Southey's letters, never yet fully but very

voluminously published, have not been altogether fortunate in their fashion of publication. There have been questionings about the propriety of "Selected" Works; but there surely can be little doubt that in the case of Letters a certain amount of selection is not only justifiable but almost imperative. Everyone at all addicted to correspondence must know that in writing to different people on the same or closely adjacent days, if "anything has" in the common phrase "happened" he is bound to repeat himself. He may, if he has the sense of art, take care to vary his phrase even though he knows that no two letters will have the same reader; but he cannot vary his matter much. Southey's letters, in the two collections by his son and his son-in-law, were edited without due regard to this: and the third—those to Caroline Bowles, his second wife—might have been "thinned" in a different way. But the bulk of interesting matter is still very large and the quality of the presentation is excellent. If anyone fears to plunge into some dozen volumes let him look at the "Cats" and the "Statues" of Greta Hall, printed at the end of the *Doctor*, but both in form and nature letters. He will not hesitate much longer, if he knows good letter-stuff when he sees it.[1]

Most of the second group wrote letters worth reading, but only one of them reaches the first rank in the art; it is true that he is among the first *of* the first. The letters of Landor supply not the least part of that curious problem which is presented by his whole work. They naturally give less room than the *apices* of his regular prose and of his poetry for that marvellous perfection of style and phrase

[1] For a singular misjudgment on this point see Prefatory Note *infra*.

which is allowed even by those who complain of a want of substance in him. And another complaint of his "aloofness" affects them in two ways rather damagingly. When it is present it cuts at the root of one of the chief interests of letters, which is intimacy. When it is absent, and Landor presents himself in his well-known character of an angry baby (as for instance when he remarked of the Bishop who did not do something he wanted, that "God alone is great enough for him [Walter Savage Landor] to ask anything of *twice*") he becomes merely— or perhaps to very amiable folk rather painfully—ridiculous. De Quincey and Hazlitt diverted a good deal of what might have been utilised as mere letter-writing faculty into their very miscellaneous work for publication. Moore could write very good letters himself: but is perhaps most noted and notable in connection with the subject as being one of the earliest and best "Life-and-Letters" craftsmen in regard to Byron.

But none of these restrictions or provisos is requisite, or could for a moment be thought of, in reference to Charles Lamb. Of him, as of hardly any other writer of great excellence (perhaps Thackeray is most like him in this way) it can be said that if we had nothing but his letters we should almost be able to detect the qualities which he shows in his regular works. Some of the *Essays of Elia* and his other miscellanies are or pretend to be actual letters. Certainly not a few of his letters would seem not at all strange and by no means unable to hold up their heads, if they had appeared as Essays of that singularly fortunate Italian who had his name taken, *not* in vain but in order to be titular author of some of the choicest things in literature.

Indeed that unique combination of bookishness and native fancy which makes the "Eliesque" quality is obviously as well suited to the letter as to the essay, and would require but a stroke or two of the pen, in addition or deletion, to produce examples of either. One often feels as if it must have been, as the saying goes, a toss-up whether the *London Magazine* or some personal friend got a particular composition; whether it was issued to the public direct or waited for Serjeant Talfourd to collect and edit it. The two English writers whom, on very different sides of course, Lamb most resembles, and whom he may be said to have copied (of course as genius copies) most, are Sterne and Sir Thomas Browne. But between the actual letters and the actual works of these two, themselves, there is a great difference, while (as has just been noted) in Lamb's case there is none. The reason of course is that though Sir Thomas is one of our very greatest authors and the Reverend Yorick not by any means unplaced in the running for greatness, both are in the highest degree artificial: while Lamb's way of writing, complex as it is, necessitating as it must have done not a little reading and (as would seem almost necessary) not a little practice, seems to run as naturally as a child's babble. The very tricks—mechanical dots, dashes, aposiopeses—which offend us now and then in Sterne; the unfamiliar Latinisms which frighten some and disgust others in Browne, drop from Lamb's lips or pen like the pearls of the Fairy story. Unless you are born out of sympathy with Elia, you never think about them as tricks at all. Now this naturalness—it can hardly be said too often here—is the one thing needful in letters. The different forms of it may be as various and as far apart from each

other as those of the other Nature in flora or fauna, on mountain and sea, in field and town. But if it is there, all is right.

There are few more interesting groups in the population of our subject than that formed by the three poets whom we mentioned last when classifying the epistolers of the early nineteenth century. There is hardly one of them who has not been ranked by some far from contemptible judgments among our greatest as poets; and merely as letter-writers they have been put correspondingly high by others or the same. It is rather curious that the most contested as to his place as a poet has been, as a rule, allowed it most easily as a letter-writer. The enormous vogue which Byron's verse at once attained both at home and abroad—has at home if not abroad (where reputations of poets often depend upon extra-poetical causes) long ceased to be undisputed: indeed has chiefly been sustained by spasmodic and not too successful exertions of individuals. It was never, of course, paralleled in regard to his letters. But these letters early obtained high repute and have never, in the general estimate, lost it. Some good judges even among those who do not care very much for the poems, have gone so far as to put him among our very best epistolers; and few have put him very much lower. Acceptance of the former estimate certainly—perhaps even of the latter—depends however upon the extent to which people can also accept recognition in Byron of the qualities of "Sincerity and Strength." That he was always a great though often a careless craftsman, and sometimes a great artist in literature, nobody possessed of the slightest critical ability can deny or doubt. But there are some who shake their heads over the attribution of anything

like "sincerity" to him, except very occasionally: and who if they had to translate his "strength" into Greek would select the word *Bia* ("violence") and not the word *Kratos* (simple "strength") from the *dramatis personae* of the *Prometheus Vinctus*. Now "sincerity" of a kind—even of that kind which we found in Walpole and did not find in Pope—has been contended for here as a necessity in the best, if not in all good, letters; and "violence" is almost fatal to them. Of a certain kind of letter Byron was no doubt a skilful practitioner.[1] But to some it will or may always seem that the vital principle of his correspondence is to that of the real "Best" as stage life to life off the stage. These two can sometimes approach each other marvellously: but they are never the same thing.

When Mr. Matthew Arnold expressed the opinion that Shelley's letters were more valuable than his poetry it was, of course, as Lamb said of Coleridge "only his fun." In the words of another classic, he "did it to annoy, because he knew it teased" some people. The absurdity is perhaps best antagonised by the perfectly true remark that it only shows that Mr. Arnold understood the letters and did not understand the poetry. But it was a little unfortunate, not for the poetry but for the letters, against which it might create a prejudice. They are so good that they ought not to have been made victims of what in another person the same judge would have called, and rightly, a *saugrenu*[2] judgment. Like all good letters—perhaps all without exception according to Demetrius and

[1] Particularly when he is able to apply the *Don Juan* mood of sarcastic if rather superficial life-criticism in which he was a real master.

[2] *I.e.* "violently and vulgarly absurd."

Newman—they carry with them much of their author's idiosyncrasy, but in a fashion which should help to correct certain misjudgments of that idiosyncrasy itself. Shelley *is* "unearthly," but it is an entire mistake to suppose that his unearthliness can never become earthly to such an extent as is required. The beginning of *The Recollection* ("We wandered to the pine forest") is as vivid a picture of actual scenery as ever appeared on the walls of any Academy: and *The Witch of Atlas* itself, not to mention the portrait-frescoes in *Adonais*, is quite a *waking* dream. The quality of liveness is naturally still more prominent in the letters, because poetical transcendence of fact is not there required to accompany it. But it *does* accompany now and then; and the result is a blend or brand of letter-writing almost as unlike anything else as the writer's poetry, and in its own (doubtless lower) kind hardly less perfect. To prefer the letters to the poems is merely foolish, and to say that they are as good as the poems is perhaps excessive. But they comment and complete the Shelley of the Poems themselves in a manner for which we cannot be too thankful.

The letters of Keats did not attract much notice till long after those of Byron, and no short time after those of Shelley, had secured it. This was by no means wholly, though it may have been to some extent indirectly, due to the partly stupid and partly malevolent attempts to smother his poetical reputation in its cradle. The letters were inaccessible till the late Lord Houghton practically resuscitated Keats; and till other persons—rather in the "Codlin not Short" manner—rushed in to correct and supplement Mr. Milnes as he then was. And it was even much later still before two very different editors, Sir

Sidney Colvin and the late Mr. Buxton Forman, completed, or nearly so, the publication. Something must be said and may be touched on later in connection with a very important division of our subject in general, as to the publication by the last-named, of the letters to Fanny Brawne: but nothing in detail need be written, and it is almost needless to say that none of these letters will appear here. No one but a brute who is also something of a fool will think any the worse of Keats for writing them. A thought of *sunt lacrimae rerum* is all the price that need be paid by any one who chooses to read them, nor is it our business to characterise at length the taste and wits of the person who could publish them.[1]

But putting this question aside, it is unquestionable that for some years past there has been a tendency to value the Letters as a whole very highly. Not only has unusual critical power been claimed for Keats on the strength of them, but general epistolary merit; and though nobody, so far as one knows, has yet paralleled the absurdity above mentioned in the case of Shelley, Keats has been taken by some credit-worthy judges as an unusually strong witness to the truth of the proposition already adopted here, that poets are good letter-writers.

He certainly is no exception to the rule; but to what exact extent he exemplifies it may not be a matter to be settled quite off hand. There is no doubt that at his best Keats is excellent in this way, and that best is perhaps to

[1] It may, however, be suggested that the extraordinary *bluntness* (to use no stronger word) of both is almost sufficiently evidenced in the fact that in his last edition of Keats Mr. Forman committed the additional outrage of distributing these letters according to their dates among the rest. The isolation of the agony gives almost the only possible excuse for revealing it.

be found with greatest certainty, by anyone who wants to dip before plunging, in the letters to his brother and sister-in-law, George and Georgiana. Those to his little sister Fanny are also charming in their way, though the peculiar and very happy mixture of life and literature to be found in the others does not, of course, occur in them. His letters of description, to whomsoever written, are, as one might expect, first-rate; and the very late specimen—one of his very last to anyone—to *Mrs.* not Miss Brawne is as brave as it is touching. As for the criticism, there are undoubtedly (as again we should expect from the author of the wonderful preface to *Endymion*) invaluable remarks—the inspiration of poetical practice turned into formulas of poetical theory. On the other hand, the famous advice to Shelley to "be more of an artist and load every rift with ore"—Shelley whose art transcends artistry and whose substance is as the unbroken nugget gold, so that there are no rifts in it to load—is, even when one remembers how often poets misunderstand each other,[1] rather "cold water to the back" of admiration.

It may, however, not unfairly introduce a very few considerations on the side of Keats's letters which is not so good. All but idolaters acknowledge a certain boyishness in him—a boyishness which is in fact no mean source contributary of his charm in verse. It is perhaps not always quite so charming in prose, and especially in letters. You do not want self-criticism of an obviously second-thought kind in them. But you do want that

[1] It is of course true that Shelley himself did not at first quite appreciate Keats. But *Adonais* cancels the deficit and leaves an almost infinite balance in favour. One can only hope that, had the circumstances been reversed, Keats would have set the account right as triumphantly.

less obtrusive variety which prevents them from appearing unkempt, "down-at-heel" etc. Perhaps there is, at any rate in the earlier letters, something of this unkemptness in Keats as an epistoler.

A hasty person may say "What! do you venture to quarrel with letters where, side by side with agreeable miscellaneous details, you may suddenly come upon the original and virgin text of 'La Belle Dame sans Merci'?" Most certainly not. Such a find, or one ten times less precious, would make one put up with accompaniments much more than ten times worse than the worst of Keats's letters. But it may be observed that the objection is only a fresh example of the unfortunate tendency [1] of mankind to "ignore elenchs" as the logicians say, or, as less pedantic phraseology has it, to talk beside the question. A man might put a thousand pound note (and you might spend many thousand pound notes without buying anything like the poem just mentioned) in a coarse, vulgar, trivial or in other ways objectionable letter. The note would be most welcome in itself, but it would not improve the quality of its covering epistle. Not, of course, that Keats's letters are coarse or vulgar, though they are sometimes rather trivial. But the point is that their excellency, *as* letters, does not depend on their enclosures (as we may call them) or even directly on their importance as biography which is certainly consummate. Are they good letters as such, and of how much goodness? Have they been presented as letters should be presented for reading? These are points on which, considering the title and range

[1] This tendency makes it perhaps desirable to observe that in the *particular* context of the *Belle Dame* there is nothing whatever to cavil at.

of this Introduction, it may not be improper to offer a few observations. We have already ventured to suggest that, if not the "be all and end all," at any rate the quality to be first enquired into as to its presence or its absence in letters, is "naturalness." And we have said something as to the propriety or impropriety of different modes of editing and publishing them. The present division of the subject seems to afford a specially good text for adding something more on both these matters.

As to the first point, the text is specially good because of the position of Keats in the most remarkable group in which we have rather found than placed him. To the present writer, as a reader, it seems, as has been already said whether justly or unjustly, that the element of "naturalness"—it is an ugly word, and French has no better, in fact none at all: though German is a little luckier with *natürlichkeit* and Spanish much with *naturaleza* —is rather conspicuously deficient in Byron. In Shelley it is pre-eminent, and can only be missed by those who have no kindred touch of the nature which it reflects. Shelley could be vague, unpractical, mystical; he could sometimes be just a little silly; but it was no more possible for him to be affected, or to make those slips of taste which are a sort of *minus* corresponding to the *plus* of affectation, than it was (after *Queen Mab* at least) to write anything that was not poetry. Thus in addition to the literary perfection of his letters, they have the *sine qua non* of naturalness in perfection also.

But with Keats things are different. Opinions differ as to whether he ever quite reached maturity even in poetry to the extent into which Shelley struck straight with *Alastor*, never losing it afterwards, and leaving us only to

wonder what conceivable accomplishment might have even transcended *Adonais* and its successors. That with all his marvellous promise and hardly less marvellous achievement, Keats was only reaching maturity when he died has been generally allowed by the saner judgments.[1] Now *im*maturity has perhaps its own naturalness which is sometimes, and in a way, very charming, but is not the naturalness pure and simple of maturity. Children are sometimes, nay often, very pretty, agreeable and amusing things: but there comes a time when we rather wish they would go to the nursery. Perhaps the "sometimes" occurs with Keats's earlier letters if not with his later.

He is thus also a text for the second part of our sermon—the duty of editors and publishers of correspondence. There is much to be said for the view that publication, as it has been put, "is an unpardonable sin," that is to say, that no author (or rather no author's ghost) can justly complain if what he once deliberately published is, when all but the control of the dead hand is off, republished. *Il l'a voulu*, as the famous tag from Molière has it. But letters in the stricter sense—that is to say, pieces of private correspondence—are in very different case. Not only were they, save in very few instances, never *meant* for publication: but, which is of even more importance, they were never *prepared* for publication.[2] Not only, again, did the writer never see them in "proof," much less in "revise," as the technical terms go, but he never, so far

[1] The recent centenary saw, as usual, with much welcome appreciation some uncritical excesses.

[2] In not a few cases they may be said to have been deliberately *un*prepared—intended though not labelled as "private and confidential."

as we know, exercised on them even the revision which all but the most careless authors give before sending their manuscripts to the printer. Some people of course do read over their letters before sending them: but it must be very rarely and in special, not to say dubious, cases that they do this with a view to the thing being seen by any other eyes than those of the intended recipient. It is therefore to the last degree unfair to plump letters on the market unselected and uncastigated. To what length the castigation should proceed is of course matter for individual taste and judgment. Nothing must be put in —that is clear; but as to what may or should be left out, "there's the rub." Perhaps the best criterion, though it may be admitted to be not very easy of application, is "Would the author, in publishing, have left it out or not?" Sometimes this will pass very violent expressions of opinion and even sentiments of doubtful morality and wisdom. But that it should invariably exclude mere trivialities, faults of taste, slovenlinesses of expression, etc., is at least the opinion of the present writer. And a "safety razor" of such things might perhaps with advantage have been used on Keats's, though he has written nothing which is in the least discreditable to him.

V

NINETEENTH CENTURY LETTERS. LATER

PART at least of these general remarks has a very special relevance to the rest of our story. There may be differences of respectable opinion as to the system of editing just advocated; but they will hardly concern one point—that the susceptibilities of living persons must be considered. To some extent indeed this is a mere counsel of selfish prudence: for an editor who neglects it may get himself into serious difficulties. Even where such danger does not exist, or might perhaps be disregarded, it is impossible for any decent person to run the risk of needlessly offending others. It will be seen at once that this introduces a new matter for consideration in regard to most—practically all—of the correspondences which we have still to survey. Even those just discussed have only recently passed from under its range. Shelley's son died not so very long ago: grandchildren of Byron much more recently; and if Keats had lived to the ordinary age of man and had, as he very likely would have done, married not Fanny Brawne, but somebody else later, a son or daughter of his (daughters are particularly and sometimes inconveniently loyal to their deceased parents) might be alive and flourishing now. As this constraint extends not merely to the families of the writers but to those of persons

mentioned by them (not to speak of these persons themselves in the most recent cases), it exercises, as will at once be seen, a most wide-ranging cramp and brake upon publication. Blunders are occasionally made of course: the most remarkable in recent times was probably an oversight of the editor of Edward FitzGerald's letters, than which hardly any more interesting exist among those yet to be noticed. FitzGerald, quite innocently and without the slightest personal malevolence but thinking only of Mrs. Browning's work, had expressed himself (as anybody might in a private letter) to the effect that perhaps we need not be sorry for her death. Unfortunately the letter was published while her husband was still alive: and many people must remember the very natural and excusable, but somewhat excessive and undignified, explosion which followed on his part.

Such things must of course be avoided at all costs; and the consequence is that nineteenth century letters must frequently—in fact with rare if any exceptions—have appeared in a condition of expurgation which cannot but have affected their spirit and savour to a very considerable extent. It is for instance understood that Mr. Matthew Arnold's were very severely censored; and, while readily believing this and acquiescing in its probable propriety, the old Adam in some readers may be unable to refrain from regret.

Again, there is something to be said about the less good effects of that "Life-and-Letters" system which has been quite rightly welcomed and praised for its better ones. Drawing on the Letters—with good material to work on and good skill in the worker—improves the Life enormously; but it is by no means certain—indeed it has

been hinted already—that the Letters themselves do not to a certain extent lose by it. Indeed from one point of view, the word "loss" may be used in its most literal meaning. The compiler of one very famous biography was said, for instance, to have—with a disregard of the value of letters as autographs which was magnificent perhaps in one way but far from "the game" in others—cut up the actual sheets and pasted the pieces on his manuscript, sending the whole to the printers and chancing the survival even of what was sent, when it came back with the proofs.

But there is another sense of "loss" which has also to be reckoned. The framework of biography is, or at least ought to be, something more than a mere frame: and it distracts attention from the letters themselves, breaks up their continuous effect, and in many cases necessitates at least occasional omission of parts which an editor of them by themselves would not think of excluding. Of course this is no argument against the plan as such: but it has, together with what was said recently, to be taken into account when we compare the epistolary position of the last century with that of its immediate predecessor.[1]

These remarks are made not in the least by way of depreciating or even making an apology for nineteenth century letters, but only in order to put the reader in a proper state for critical estimation of them. Nor is it necessary to repeat—still less to discuss—the more general lamentations with some reference to which we started as to any decay of letter-writing. Provisos and warnings

[1] In which, be it remembered, the "Life-and-Letters" system only came in quite late.

may be taken as having been made sufficiently: and we pass to the actual survey.

It may have been noticed in reference to the principal group of letter-writers in the eighteenth that, with the exception of Cowper, they were all acquainted with each other. Walpole knew Lady Mary, Chesterfield and Gray; while Gray, if he did not know the other two, knew Walpole very well indeed. Something of the same sort might be contended for among those whom we have selected on the bridge of the eighteenth and nineteenth. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and Lamb were of course intimately connected: Southey knew Landor and Shelley, Keats knew Shelley, Wordsworth and Lamb; while Byron and Shelley, however unequally, were pretty closely yoked together. It is not meant that in all these groups everybody wrote to each other; but that the writing faculty was curiously prominent—diffused like a kind of atmosphere—in all. Now if we look in the nineteenth for such a group it will be found perhaps less readily. But one such at least certainly exists, to wit that which includes Tennyson, Thackeray, Edward FitzGerald, Carlyle and his wife, Fanny Kemble, Sterling and one or two more. There are of course numerous others outside this group, and even in it Tennyson himself is not a very remarkable letter-writer, any more than his great rival, Browning, was. But there was the same diffusion of the letter-writing spirit which has been noticed above, and Thackeray, FitzGerald, the Carlyles, and perhaps Fanny Kemble are quite of the greater clans among our peculiar people.

The most remarkable of all these—and as it seems to the present writer, one of the most remarkable of all

English letter-writers is one whose letters have never been collected,[1] and from whom, until comparatively lately, we had only few and as it were accidental specimens. It is hoped that, notwithstanding the great changes of taste recently as to reticence or indiscretion, there are still many people who can not only understand but thoroughly sympathise with Thackeray's disgust at the idea of having his "Life" written; and the even greater reluctance which he would certainly have felt at that of having his letters published. But, as has been suggested on a former occasion, when things *are* published there is nothing disgraceful in reading them: and it may be frankly admitted that lovers of English literature would have missed much pleasure and the opportunity of much admiration if the "Brookfield" letters, those to the Baxter family and others in America, those finally included in the "Biographical" edition, and yet others which have turned up sporadically had remained unknown. It may be doubted whether there is anything like them in our literature—if indeed there is in any other—for the double, treble or even more complicated gift of view into character, matter of interest, positive literary satisfaction, and (perhaps most remarkable of all) resemblance to and explanation of the author's "regular literature," as it has been called. In some respects they resemble the letters of Keats; but there is absent from them the immaturity which was noted in those, and which extended to both matter and style. They are more various in subject and tone than Shelley's. They are not deliberately quaint like Lamb's; and they naturally lack (whether this is wholly an advantage or

[1] At the very moment when this is being written a considerable new body of them is announced for sale.

not, may admit, though not here, of dispute) the restraint [1] which, in greater or less degree and in varied kind, characterizes the great eighteenth century epistolers.

One additional charm which many of them possess may be regarded by extreme precisians as of doubtful legitimacy as far as comment here is concerned : but this may be ruled out as a superfluous scruple. It is the illumination of the text " by the author's own candles " as he himself says in a well-known Introduction : the actual "illustration" by insertion in the script, of little pen-drawings. The shortcomings of Thackeray's draughtsmanship have always been admitted : and by nobody more frankly than by himself. But they hardly affect this sort of " picturing " at all. The unfortunate inability to depict a pretty facc which he deplored need do no harm whatever : and his lack of " composition " not much. A spice of caricature is almost invariably admissible in such things : and the same tricksy spirit which prompted the hundreds of initials, *culs-de-lampe* etc. contributed by him to *Punch* and to be found collected in the " Oxford " edition of his works, was most happily at hand for use in letters. Some years ago there appeared, in a catalogue of autographs for sale, an extract of text and cut which was irresistibly funny. The author and designer had had a mishap by slipping on that peculiarly treacherous suddenly frozen rain for which (though we are liable enough to it in England and though some living have seen the entire Strand turned into one huge pantomime scene,

[1] The word " restraint " may be misunderstood : but it is intended to indicate something of the general difference between " classical " ages on the one side and " romantic " or " realist " on the other.

roars of laughter included, as people came out of theatres) we have no special name. (The French, in whose capital it is said to be even more frequent, call it *verglas*.) In telling it he had drawn himself sitting (as involuntarily though one hopes not so eternally as *infelix Theseus*) with arms, legs, hat, etcetera in disorder suitable to the occasion and with a facial expression of the most ludicrous dismay. It can hardly have taken a dozen strokes of the pen: but they simply glorified the letter.

In no sense, however, can the value and delight of Thackeray's letters be said to depend upon this *bonus* of illustration. Without it they would be among the most noteworthy and the most delectable of their kind. One sees in them the "first state" of that extraordinary glancing at all sorts of side-views, possible objections and comments on "what the other fellow thinks," which is the main secret in his published writings. If the view of him as a "sentimentalist" (which nobody, unless it is taken offensively, need refuse to accept) is strengthened by them, that absurd other view, which strangely prevailed so long, of his "cynicism" is utterly destroyed. We see the variety of his interests; the keenness of his sensations; the strange and kaleidoscopic rapidity of the changes in his mood and thought. And through the whole there runs the wonderful style which was so long unrecognised—nay, which those who go by the trumpery machine-made rules of "composition books" used gravely to stigmatise as "incorrect." Time lifts a great many (though not perhaps all) the restraints upon publication which have been discussed and advocated above: and it will probably be possible some day for posterity to possess, not only a collected body of the now scattered Thackeray

letters, but a considerably larger one than has ever appeared even in extracts and catalogues. It will be an addition to our Epistolary Library which can bear comparison with any previous occupant of those shelves: and one of the books which deserve, in a very peculiar sense, the hackneyed praise of being "as good as a novel." For it will be almost the equivalent of an additional novel of its author's own—a *William Makepeace Thackeray* in the familiar novel-form of title, and in the old Richardsonian form of contents—but oh! how different from anything of Richardson's save that it might possibly make you hang yourself, not because you could not get to the story, but because you had come to the end of it.

If, however, anyone insists on a formal and more or less complete presentation, already existing, of nineteenth century "Letters" in a body by a single writer, the palm must probably be given to those (already referred to) of the translator or paraphrast of Omar Khayyàm. Besides their great intrinsic interest and peculiar idiosyncrasy, they have, for anyone studying the subject as we are endeavouring to do, a curious attraction of comparison. Letter-writing, though by no means exclusively, would appear to be specially and peculiarly the *forte* of men who live somewhat special and peculiar lives—men without the ordinary family ties of wife and children—sometimes though by no means always, recluses; possibly to some extent "originals," "humourists," "eccentrics," as they have been called at different times and from different points of view. Even Walpole, fond as he was of society, belongs to the class after a fashion, as do also Chesterfield[1]

[1] Chesterfield's deafness might, without frivolity, be brought in. It is a hindrance to conversation, but none to letter-writing.

and Lady Mary, while Gray, Cowper, and at a later period Lamb, are eminently of it. But hardly anyone so unquestionably comes under the classification as Edward FitzGerald. He certainly was for a time married, but that marriage as certainly was not made in Heaven, if it was not conspicuously of the other origin: and actual cohabitation lasted but a short time. He had no children, and though he frequently foregathered with the family from which he sprang, he was essentially a "solitary." Such solitaries, even if they do not ticket and advertise themselves as such after the fashion of Rousseau and Senancour and the author of *Jacopo Ortis*, naturally enough find in letters the outlet for communication with their fellows [1] which others find in conversation, and the occupation which those others have ready-made, in society, business of all kinds etc. That some copious and excellent letter-writers, such as for instance Southey, have been extremely busy, and "family men" of the most unblemished character, merely shows that the rule is not universal. But it may be observed that their letters usually have less intense idiosyncrasy than those of the others.

Of such idiosyncrasy, both in letters and in other work, few men have had more than the author of *Euphranor* and (as we have had to say before) the "translator or paraphrast" not merely of Persian but of Spanish and Greek masterpieces. It is indeed notorious that it was in this latter capacity that he showed the individuality of his genius most strongly. It is a frequently but perhaps idly [2]

[1] Or at least expression of themselves.

[2] Idly: because he himself expressly and repeatedly disclaims *mere* "translation."

disputed question how much is Omar and how much FitzGerald, while the problem might certainly be extended by asking how much is Aeschylus and how much Calderon in his versions of those masters: but it does not concern us here. What does concern us is the fact that he has contrived to make his most famous exercise in translation signally, and the others to some extent, not dead "versions," but as it were reincarnations of the original, the spirit or the flesh (whichever anyone pleases) being his own, or both being blended of his and the author's. To do this requires, a "strong nativity" though not in the equivocal sense in which another great translator of FitzGerald's own type[1] used that term. It shows in his scanty "original" work: but it shows also and perhaps more strongly in his letters. Everyone who has studied the history of the English Universities in connection with that of English literature knows, even if he has not been fortunate enough to experience it, the remarkable fashion in which, at certain times, colleges and coteries at Oxford and Cambridge have seemed to throw a strange and almost magical influence over a generation (hardly more) of undergraduates. There was unmistakably such an *aura* or atmosphere about in Trinity College, Cambridge, during the last of the twenties and the first of the thirties of the nineteenth century—a spirit of literature and humour, of seriousness and jest, of prose sense and half mystical poetry—which produced things as diverse as *The Dying Swan* and Clarke's *Library of Useless Knowledge*, *Vanity Fair* and the English *Rubaiyát*.

Of this curiously blended mood-combination—of which in their different ways Tennyson and Thackeray, as

[1] Dryden, in reference to Shadwell.

universally known, Brookfield, W. B. Donne, G. S. Venables, as less known, but noteworthy instances suggest themselves as examples—FitzGerald was certainly not the least remarkable. He had, as eccentrics usually and almost necessarily have, not a few limitations, some of which possibly were, though others certainly were not, deliberately assumed or accepted. He would not allow that Tennyson had ever in his later work (not latest by any means) done anything so good as his earlier. In that unlucky though quite blameless observation on Mrs. Browning which was referred to above, he ignored or showed himself unable to appreciate the fact that the poetess had never done anything better than, if anything so good as, some of her very latest work.[1] It cannot be considered an entirely adequate cause for ceasing to live with your wife,[2] that her dresses rustle; and many other instances of what may be called practical and literary *non-sequiturs* might be alleged against him. But all these "queernesses" are evidence of a temperament and a mode of thinking which are likely to produce very satisfactory letters. They are sure not to be dull: and when the

[1] "The Great God Pan" piece ("A Musical Instrument"), one of the last, was perhaps her *very* best. But he may have been thinking of *Poems before Congress*, which are poor enough.

[2] Lucy, daughter of that curious Quaker banker's clerk Bernard Barton, whose poetry is negligible, but who must have had some strong personal attraction. For he was a favourite correspondent of two of the greatest of contemporary letter-writers, Lamb and FitzGerald, though he constantly misunderstood their letters; he received from Byron—on an occasion likely to provoke one of the "noble poet's" outbursts of pseudo-aristocratic insolence—a singularly wise and kindly answer; and having as a perfect stranger lectured Sir Robert Peel he was—invited to dinner!

queerness is accompanied by such literary power as "Fitz" possessed they are not likely to be merely silly, as some things are which attempt not to be dull. As a matter of fact they are delightful: and their variety is astonishing. Odd stories and odd experiences seem, despite his almost claustral life, to have had a habit of flying to FitzGerald like filings to a magnet—as for instance the irresistible anecdote of the parish clerk who insisted on giving out for singing casual remarks of the parson above him as if they were verses of a hymn, and who was duly echoed by the congregation. Even when he does not make you laugh he satisfies you: even when you do not agree with him you are obliged to him for having expressed his heresy.

One of FitzGerald's special correspondents was, for reasons then imperative, not a member of the Cambridge group itself, but as closely connected with it as possible: being the sister of one of its actual members. John M. Kemble, one of our earliest and best Anglo-Saxon scholars in modern times, was, like others of his famous family (so far as is generally known) a person of varied talents, though he showed these neither in letter writing nor in the direction which Tennyson incorrectly augured in the "Sonnet to J.M.K." His sister Frances (invariably, like most though by no means all ladies of her name, called "Fanny"[1]) was a very remarkable person indeed. After taking early and with brilliant success to the stage

[1] Some have attempted to make a distinction, alleging that there are Franceses who can be called "Fanny" and others who can not. But it is doubtful whether this holds. Of two great proficients of "letter-stuff" in overlapping generations Fanny Burney was eminently a "Fanny." Fanny Kemble, though always called so, was not.

which might almost be said to be hers by inheritance,[1] she married an American planter with even worse results (they were actually divorced) than her friend FitzGerald's marriage brought about later: and for many years returned to public life, not as an actress but as a reader. She wrote and published both prose and verse of various kinds: but her best known work and that which places her here, is a voluminous series of "Records," etc., much of which is composed of actual letters, while practically the whole of it is what we have called "letter-stuff." It has perhaps been published *too* voluminously: and it is certain that, as indeed one might expect, its parts are not equal in interest. But experienced and balanced judgment must always sum up in her favour as possessing, in letter- and even other writing, more than ordinary talent, perhaps never quite happily or fully developed. Merely as a person she seems to have exercised an extraordinary attraction without being exactly amiable[2]: and from the intellectual and artistic sides as a writer (we have nothing here to do with her histrionic powers) to have been what has sometimes in others been called "inorganic," "ill-regulated," "not brought off," etc., but of extraordinary capacity.

This may have had something to do with her sudden and exceptional success, when at barely twenty, and with no

[1] She was the niece of Mrs. Siddons and of John Kemble, generally considered the greatest tragic actor and actress we have had; the daughter of Charles Kemble, a player and manager of long practice and great ability; while she had yet another uncle and any number of more distant relations in the profession.

[2] See Prefatory Note on her letters *infra*, for an illustration of what is said of her here and of Mrs. Carlyle a little further.

training except what heredity might give her, she "took the town [and the country] by storm" as Juliet, and very soon afterwards "carried" America likewise. But her "records" of these and other things are of almost the first quality: and this power of "recording" continued and was perhaps stimulated by the less as well as the more fortunate events of her life. It may be said indeed that in her time a young woman of full age (she was five and twenty), unusual experience of the world, and still more unusual wits, had no business to marry a planter in the Southern States, knowing that she was to live there, unless she had reconciled herself to the institution of slavery. Nor can anybody without prejudice deny this. But the inconsistency and the troubles it developed gave occasion to some very remarkable "recording," and the same had been the case earlier with her life, whether at home, on the stage, or in society, and was the case later whether she lived in England, in the Northern States, or on the Continent of Europe. Perhaps you never exactly like her: an unusual experience in the reading of letters, which for the most part are singularly reconciling from the mere fact of their explanatory quality. There is indeed no better confirmation of the well-known French saying *tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*. Here, however, there are, as elsewhere, exceptions—Gray being perhaps one[1] as our present subject is another. But there are few things more interesting, though their interest may be somewhat tragic, than the spectacle of the way "things go

[1] Gray may not produce this effect of slight repulsion on everyone: but on the other hand it is pretty generally admitted that the more you read Walpole the more does the prejudice, which Macaulay and others have helped to create against him, crumble and melt.

wrong" so easily, so finally, so fatally. Fanny Kemble had a sister Adelaide, afterwards Mrs. Sartoris, with whom everything appears to have gone right: but with herself it "seemed otherwise to the Gods." And her letters or memoirs, or whatever they are to be called, are the record thereof, as well as of other things.

The letters and "letter-stuff" of the Carlyles, husband and wife, according to the inevitable misfortune attending so much of our subject—supplied the occasion of volumes of that disgusting and most idle controversy which has made many people of taste pray that nothing biographical may ever be published about them. Far be it from us to take part in a game which if it does not always, like the unpleasant personage in the old ballad,

Come for ill and never for good,

certainly comes for the former much oftener than for the latter purpose and result. *Sunt lacrimae rerum* is—once more and as so often—the best and the sufficient observation. But there remains in the letters of both, and especially in those of the lady, plenty of wholesome interest and of justifiable—not spying or eavesdropping—information as to character. Judged comparatively, they certainly do not contradict the notion formerly referred to, that in some respects letter-writing is a specially feminine gift. Carlyle's own letters [1] have plenty of merit and attraction—some of the descriptive ones especially: and they demonstrate, in the infallible way which letters and letters alone can supply in the absence of long personal familiarity, that the general tone and key of his writings

[1] They grow more and more numerous: a fresh batch having been announced while this Introduction was being written.

was no falsetto but a perfectly genuine thing—that the often urged contrast of the *Life of Schiller*, instead of evidencing affectation in the later work, only proves constraint in the earlier. At the same time, except for what may be called side-illustration of the works, and completion of the biography for those who want it, there is not very much in Carlyle's letters which would be a serious loss.

With his wife the case is different. Without her "Letters and Memorials" we might (it is rather improbable that we *should*, owing to the misdemeanours of more persons than one and the blow-fly appetite of a part of the public for sore places) have escaped a good deal of the ignoble wrangling above referred to. But we should not only have failed to appreciate a very remarkable character, but have missed some of the very best of our now existing contributions to epistolary literature. Personally Mrs. Carlyle was by no means a general favourite. She had a fearfully sharp tongue, and a still sharper wit in directing it upon her victims; her experiences were not very likely to edulcorate her acids and mollify her asperities. The letters show that, as so often happens, there was plenty of sweetness within the sharp exterior, and that her strength was the strength of passion, not of obduracy. But this is not all. There might have been biographical whitewashing of this kind without much gain to pure literature. But the letters showed likewise a power of expression, both lighter and more serious, which is hardly inferior to that found in any correspondence of man or woman, genuine or fictitious. Some people, not given to rash superlatives and pretty extensively acquainted with literature, have held that the letter

describing her visit after many years to Haddington, and the reminiscences it called forth, has no superior in the vast range of our subject for pure pathos perfectly expressed, without constraint on nature yet without loss of dignity.[1] On the other hand, the half comic accounts of her domestic troubles etc. are worthy of Fielding or Thackeray. The fact is that Mrs. Carlyle possessed what is rare in women—humour. And she exemplified, as few other women and not so very many men have done, Anne Evans's matchless definition of it as "thinking in jest while feeling in earnest." Moreover while, as all true humourists can, she could drop the jest altogether when necessary, she could, as is the case with them likewise, never quite discard the earnest.

Some of the most distinguished of Carlyle's contemporaries, the great men of letters of the mid-nineteenth century, have left letters more or less copious and more or less valuable from one or both of the two sides, biographical and literary, but not eminently so. Macaulay's letters and diaries suit biography excellently, and have been excellently used in his. They lighten and sweeten the rather boisterous "cocksureness" of the published writings: and help his few but very remarkable poems other than the *Lays* (which are excellent but in a different kind) to show the soul and heart of the man as apart from his mere intellect. But they are not perhaps intrinsically very capital. So also in Dickens's case the "Life-and-Letters" system is excellently justified, but one does not

[1] I see that Mr. Paul also has made special reference to this letter and no wonder. From the time of its first publication I have regarded it as matchless. But it seems to me that while it is lawful to mention it, it should not have been published and that to republish it here would be at least questionable.

know that the letters in themselves would always deserve a first class in this particular school of *Literae Humaniores*. Letter-writing admits—if it may not even require—a certain kind of egotism. But it must be what the French call an *Egoisme à plusieurs*—a temper which takes, if only for the moment, other people into itself and cares for them there. "The Inimitable" was perhaps too generally thinking of that Inimitable himself or of the fictitious creations of his marvellous genius. If, like his own Mr. Toots, he could have written some letters to or from *them* it would have been a very different thing. In this respect he does not, as in others he does, resemble Balzac, whose egotism was in a way as intense as his own and like it extended to his creations, but could extend farther: while the contrast with Thackeray is even more salient than in other cases from this same point of view. At the same time it must not be supposed that there is any intention here of belittling Dickens, either as a letter-writer or in any other way. It is only suggested that he lacks one of the things necessary to perfect letter-writing. Perhaps his most noteworthy productions in the style are his editorial criticisms—rather limited in taste and purview, but singularly shrewd within other limits. And many of the others tell their substance with that faculty of "telling" which he possessed as few have ever done, while the comedy of those given here is "the true Dickens."

Mention of the three greatest novelists (English and French) of the mid-nineteenth century naturally suggests the rest of a class so predominant in that century's literary production. Their record in the matter is rather chequered, for reasons, in some respects and cases at any rate, not difficult to discover. Reference is elsewhere

made to the disappointment experienced (perhaps not too reasonably) by some readers of the letters of George Eliot. A not dissimilar feeling had been expressed earlier in regard to those of Miss Austen: which, however, were intrinsically far superior. Except to her sister, and it may be even to her, Jane Austen was not at all likely to indulge in what is called in French *épanchement*. it was not in the least her line, whether in writing for publication or otherwise. Only one full year passed between the death of Miss Austen and the birth of Miss Evans, and the two illustrated very fairly the comfortable if not invariably accurate idea that when one human being dies another is born to succeed him or her in their special functions. But, as in other respects, they differed here remarkably; and though in neither case was the nature of the writer exactly expansive, this want of expansiveness was very differently conditioned. Miss Austen no doubt could, if she had chosen, (she has done something like it as it is) have written most delightful letters. A hundred scenes in the novels from Catherine Morland's tremors and trials, or John Dashwood's progressive limitations of generosity for his sisters, to some of the best things in *Persuasion*, would take letter form with the happiest results. But she did not choose that it should be so. George Eliot, on the other hand, after her earlier days, had ensconced herself in such a chrysalis of quasi-philosophical and quasi-scientific thought and speech that she could hardly have recovered the freedom of expression which is almost the soul of letter-writing.

Some of Bulwer's (the first Lord Lytton's) letters are remarkable in ways, especially that of literary criticism, which might hardly be expected by anyone who had

insufficiently taken the measure of his strangely unequal and imperfect, yet as strangely varied, talent. But as the century went on a new prohibitory influence arose in the enormous professional production which began to be customary with novelists—principally tempted no doubt by the corresponding gain of money, but perhaps also by the nobler desire of increasing, or at least living up to, their reputations. Even short of the unbroken drudgery which, it is said, compelled one lady novelist, of high rank for a time, to scribble her novels as she was actually receiving and talking to morning callers, the production of three or four novels a year—and those not the cock-boats we often see now but attempts at least at " the old three-decker " in its fullest dimensions—could leave little time or inclination for extensive letter-writing. There were, however, some exceptions. Charles Kingsley—who, though his novels were not very numerous, supplemented them with all sorts of miscellaneous writing for publication, was a diligent sportsman, an active cleric, and a busy man in many kinds and ways—wrote certainly good and probably many letters. The two brighter stars in the Brontë constellation, especially Charlotte, were scarcely less remarkable with the pen in this way than in others: and Mrs. Gaskell, Charlotte's biographer, has been put high by some. The unconquerable personality of Charles Reade showed itself here as elsewhere[1]: and others might be

[1] The present writer remembers as a boy reading (he supposes in the newspaper to which it was addressed but is not sure) this very remarkable epistle of Reade's to an editor: " Sir, you have brains of your own and good ones. Do not echo the bray of such a very small ass as the . . . ." There was more, but this was the gist of it. Whether it has ever reappeared he cannot say.

mentioned.[1] But perhaps the most distinguished novelist next to Thackeray of the nineteenth century, who was also a most distinguished letter-writer, was one who died in middle age not long before its end—Robert Louis Stevenson.

Stevenson had in fact practically all the qualifications necessary for a good practitioner of our art. He had, eminently, that gift which the Romans called *facundia* and the French can translate, if with a slight degradation of meaning, by *faconde*; but for which we, though the adjective "facund" has, one believes, been tried, possess no noun, "Eloquence" being too much specified to "fine" writing or speaking. "Facility of expression" perhaps comes nearest. Whether he corrected or corrupted this native gift by his famous "sedulous aping" of stylists before him is a debated question: but one quite unnecessary to touch here. It is sufficient to say that he never aped anyone in his letters, unless playfully and in a sort of concert with his correspondent. Indeed he possessed, quintessentially, that "naturalness" of matter and form on which so much stress has been laid. He had a disposition equally favourable to the business—if business we may call it. A person who is habitually gloomy may write capital letters of an impressive character now and then: but is likely to produce little but boredom if he extends his practice. Louis Stevenson did not habitually "regard the world through a horse collar" (as it was once put), but he certainly did not pass through

[1] Anthony Trollope did not choose to make his Autobiography a "Life-and-Letters." But he has used the inserted letter very freely and sometimes with great effect in his novels, for instance Mr. Slope's to Eleanor Harding in *Barchester Towers*.

it gnashing his teeth or holding his handkerchief to his eyes. Although he did a good deal of work, sometimes under no small difficulties, he had very little if any of that *collar*-work—that grinding "in Gaza at the mill with slaves" which takes the spring out of all but the springsomest of men. He had widely varied experience of scene, occupation, personal society. He knew plenty of books without being in the least bookish; had, as the old saying goes, "wit at will," and, though he never made deliberate and affected efforts to *get* out of ruts, *kept* out of them without the least trouble. He was as little of a "poser" or of a "rotter" as he was of a prig, and there was not a drop of bad blood in his veins. If these things could not make a good letter-writer nothing could; and there is little doubt that he will hold his place as such as long as English literature lasts. It is a great pleasure to me to give, as I hope to do, one unpublished letter of his to myself as a sort of *bonus* to the reader of this little book—a letter of rather unusual interest in literary as in other respects.

At this point, perhaps, actual survey may, and indeed had best, stop: not merely because space is closing in. Lovers of letters will of course detect what seem to them omissions in what has gone before and what comes after. Some of these, no doubt, will have been real oversights. Others, for this or that reason deliberate, such as Gibbon and Newman—the latter not merely for his re-statement of the character-value of correspondence, but for his exemplifications of it—might certainly have been more fully noticed. But in regard to later writers there are several obstacles in the path. Of some it would not be easy to speak on account of their own lives being too

recent: in regard of nearly all the same fact must have occasioned exercise of "censorship" to a degree which makes absolute judgment of their competence as epistolers rash, and comparative judgment almost impossible. To take up once more one example of men who were born a full or almost a full century ago, Mr. Paul,[1] speaking apparently with intimate knowledge of the originals, speaks also of the "severe process of excision and retrenchment to which these [*the letters of Mr. Matthew Arnold*] have been exposed." And he thinks that very few letters "could have endured" it. Those who remember the appearance of these letters will also remember that some critics doubted whether even "these" had exactly "endured it"—that is to say, whether the expected salt of the author of so much published *persiflage* had not been left out or had singularly lost its savour. To take another from the next generation, it is pretty certain that Mr. Swinburne's letters, though we have judicious selections from them, must have needed much more excision or retrenchment than Mr. Arnold's, unless he wrote them in a manner remarkably different both from his conversation and from his published works. In such cases it is best, the evidence being not fully before us, not to anticipate either the privileges or the decisions of posterity.

[1] In his Essay mentioned in Preface.

VI

SOME SPECIAL KINDS OF LETTER

A FEW more general remarks, however, on *kinds* of letter-writing—as distinguished from personality and accomplishment of letter-writers—may not improperly be added.

One extremely curious application of the Letter has not yet been noticed, except by a glance or two: and that is the way in which—when after birth-struggles for some two thousand years the novel at last got itself born—letter-writing was pressed into its service. Historically, as was briefly indicated near the beginning of this, one may connect Greek Rhetoric and Greek Romance, and suggest the connection as the origin of the "novel-in-letters." In the romance proper—that is to say that of the Middle Ages—letters do not play any very important part, just as they played none in life. But in the "Heroic" variety of the late sixteenth and the whole of the seventeenth centuries they play a much larger—partly no doubt because of the influence (here noted) of the Greek Romance itself, but more because of the increased frequency and importance of actual correspondence in life and society. We need not, however, attribute too much to this influence of imitation in seeking for the cause or causes which made Richardson adopt the form: nor need we even put down to Richardson's own popularity, abroad as well as at home,

the very general further adoption and continuance of a form which has perhaps more to be said against it than for it. Most serious students of the history of prose fiction must have noticed, and some of them have already pointed out, the curious, rather naïf, but quite obvious feeling on the part of the earlier practitioners of such fiction that somebody might ask them, in more polite language than that in which Cardinal Ippolito d'Este asked Ariosto a similar question, "Where they got their stories from?" The feeling seems sometimes to have affected poets, but much more rarely: the Muse being allowed to possess and confer a certain immunity from such cross-examination. Of the unnecessary and sometimes unnatural devices invented to answer this inconvenient question Scott in one well-known passage,[1] and others elsewhere, have made ironic lists: and not the least characteristic of Miss Austen's satiric touches is the passage where Catherine Morland expects palpitating interest from a bundle of washing-bills in a wardrobe-cupboard. But the anticipation of such a question, though perhaps it became conventional before it disappeared altogether, was certainly at one time real.

At any rate, helped by the example of Richardson—Father of English novels as he is with whatever justice called—and by that overmastering fancy for letter-writing itself, which, as should have been already made clear, affected the century in which English novels were born—the practice spread and held its ground. Fielding was too perfect an artist in the higher and purer kind of fiction to favour it: and though Sterne himself was a sufficiently characteristic letter-writer, the form would not have suited

[1] The "Answer to the Introductory Epistle" of *The Monastery*.

the peculiar eccentricity of his two novels. But Smollett's best, *Humphrey Clinker*, adopts the method, and is perhaps one of its most successful examples. It suited the author's preference for a succession of scenes rather than a connected plot; for the sharp presentation of "humours" in character and incident. And it continued to be practised both early in the nineteenth century—examples had swarmed at the end of the eighteenth—and later. *Redgauntlet* (which some have thought one of the best of Scott's novels and which few good judges would put much lower) is written in it to a great extent, but not wholly. And it may be noticed that this combination of Letters and narrative, which came in pretty early, is rather tell-tale. It is a sort of confession of what certainly is the fact—that the novel entirely by letters is a clumsy device, constantly getting in the way of the "story." Indeed the method of *Redgauntlet* is a kind of retreat to the elder and more modern—one may say the more artistic and rational—plan of *introducing* letters, but only occasionally as auxiliaries to, and as it were illustrations of, the actual narrative, not as substitutes for, or at any rate main constituents of, it.[1] Indeed, in order to make a novel wholly composed of letters thoroughly and absorbingly attractive, either charm of style such as to make the kind of literature in which it appears, more or less indifferent; or passion which is more suitable to poetry or drama than to prose; or both, may seem unnecessary.

It was also in the eighteenth century—*the* century once more of letter-writing—that letters, this time genuine not

[1] This plan was older than the "novel *by* letters," and had, as noticed above, been largely used in the sixteenth and seventeenth century "heroic" romance.

fictitious, began to play, to an important extent, a subsidiary part in yet another department of literature—biography. They had always done so, of course, to an extent less important in History, of which Biography is really a subdivision. The truth expressed in that dictum of the pseudo-Demetrius quoted above as to the illuminative power of letters on character could be missed by no historian and by no biographer who had his wits about him—even if he had less striking examples at hand than that letter of the Emperor Tiberius to the Senate which is one of the Tacitean flashes of lightning through the dark of history. But the credit of using letters as a main constituent of biography—of originating the "Life-and-Letters" class of books which fills so large a part of modern library-shelves—has been given, as far as English is concerned, to Mason in his dealings with Gray. There is so little to be said in favour of Mason, that we need not enquire too narrowly into his right to this commendation: though critical conscience must be appeased by adding that he abused his privilege as an editor and "literary executor" by garbling unblushingly. Boswell did Mason honour by acknowledging his example, and much more also by following it; and this practically settled the matter. Except in short pieces, which had need be of special excellence like Carlyle's *Sterling*, the plan has always been followed since: and there can here at least be no question that with a little favour of circumstances, it is the best plan possible. You get, as has been said, your character at first hand; if the letters include epistles to as well as from him or her, you get invaluable side-lights; you get, except in cases of wilful deception or great carelessness, the most trustworthy accounts of

fact; and you can, or ought to be able to, hear the man talking.

At the same time it must be admitted that this "Life-and-Letters" scheme, like every kind of art, requires care: and like most human things, is exposed to dangers and difficulties in addition to some previously noticed. To begin with, the *quality* of the letters has to be considered. It so happened that Mason, the originator by courtesy, had unusually good material to work with. Gray, as is above pointed out and as is also, with some provisos already made or very soon to be made, universally admitted, is one of our best letter-writers. But not everybody—not every considerable man or woman of letters even—can write good letters.

And besides this—besides the temptation to rely on the letters and merely to print them whether they deserve it or not—there is the further difficulty—to judge by the scarcity of good biographies a very great and insistent one—of composing the framework of the biography itself so as to suit the letters—to give the apples of gold in a picture not too obviously composed of some metal baser than silver. Unless this is done it would be better simply to "calendar" the letters themselves, with the barest schedule of dates and facts to assist the comprehension of them. But to consider the different methods of doing this—still more of presenting letters apart from deliberate biographical intention—would lead us too far. Carlyle's *Cromwell*—the presentation of an extraordinarily difficult set of documents not merely with connecting narrative, but with a complete explanatory commentary including paraphrase, is as remarkable an achievement as, and a far more elaborate one than, his *Sterling* in the way of

biography pure and simple. It is perhaps, though less delectable, not less admirable in its style than the other in its own. But it has, of course, the drawback of carrying with it a distinctly controversial character and, indeed, intention. We have more recently had at least two examples of the fullest possible comment with the least possible controversy in Mr. Tovey's "Gray," and of less voluminous but excellently adequate editing in Mrs. Toynbee's "Walpole."

One not very large, but extremely curious division of letter-writing closely connected with those most recently mentioned, invites if it does not insist upon a word or two. Many people—almost all who have happened to be at any time "in the lime-light" as a modern phrase goes—that is to say in positions of publicity—must have had experience of the strange appetite of their fellow-creatures for writing them letters without previous acquaintance, without excuse of introduction, and on the most flimsy pretexts of occasion. The present writer once received from Australia a long list of queries on a book of his—most if not all of which could have been answered from the ordinary reference-bookshelf in the writing-room of such a club as that—never mind whether it was in Sydney or Melbourne or Adelaide—from which the querist dated his epistle. Indeed, on another occasion somebody demanded a catalogue of "the important references to the medical profession in French literature"! This tendency of humanity sometimes exercises and magnifies itself into really remarkable correspondences. There is perhaps none such in English quite to match those *Lettres à une Inconnue* which (after standing the brunt of not a little unfavourable criticism, provoked not so much by their contents as by

the personal, political, and above all religious or anti-religious idiosyncrasy of their author, Prosper Mérimée) have taken their place, for good and all, among the classics of the art. Our most curious example perhaps is to be found in the *Letters of the Duke of Wellington to Miss J.*, the genuineness of which has been a matter of some controversy, but which are rather more inexplicable as forgeries than as authentic documents. Authors, from Richardson onwards, have been the special targets of such correspondents: and romance reports some, perhaps even history might accept a few, instances of the closest relations resulting. On the other hand, one of the very best of Miss Edgeworth's too much neglected stories, "L'Amie Inconnue" not only may be useful as a warning to the too open-hearted but has probably had not a few parallels in fact. Generally, of course, the uninvited correspondent is merely a passing phenomenon—rarely perhaps welcome except to persons of very much self-centred temperament with a good deal of time on their hands; tolerated and choked off placably by the good-natured and well-mannered; answered snappishly or not answered at all by moroser victims.

There is yet a kind of letter, fictitious or real examples whereof are not usually given in books which (as the Articles say of the Apocrypha) are to be read "for example of life and instruction of manners," though it is in a way the most interesting of all; and that is the love-letter. It is, however, so varied in kind and not so very seldom so pre-eminent as an illustration of the epistolary ideal—"writing as you would talk"—that it would be absurd to say nothing about it in this Introduction, and that it may even be possible to give some examples of it—one

such of Swift's must be given—in the text. Of those which, as it was said of one famous group (those of Mlle. de Lespinasse) "burn the paper," those of which the Abelard and Heloise collection, with those of "The Portuguese Nun," Maria Alcoforado, and Julie de Lespinasse herself are the most universally famous—we have two pretty recent collections in English from two of the greatest poets and one of the greatest poetesses in English of the nineteenth century. They are the letters, referred to above, of Keats to Fanny Brawne, and those of the Brownings to each other.

There are, it is to be hoped, few people who read such letters (unless they are of such a date that Time has exercised his strange power of resanctifying desecration and making private property public) without an unpleasant consciousness of eavesdropping. But there is another class which is not exposed to any such disagreeable liability: and that is the very large proportion of love-letters where the amativeness is, so to speak, more or less concealed, or where, though scarcely covered with the thinnest veil, it is mixed with jest sometimes, jest rather on the wrong side of the mouth, perhaps, but jest exercising its usual power of embalming. (Salt and sugar both preserve: but in this particular instance the danger is of oversweetness already.) There can—or perhaps we should say there could, but for some differences of opinion worth attending to—be no doubt that Swift owes much to this mixture: and if anybody ever undertook a large collection of the best private love-letters he would probably find the same seasoning in the best of them. For examples in which the actual amatory element is present but as it were under-current, like blood that flushes a

cheek but does not show outside it, some of the best examples are those of Scott to Lady Abercorn. Those recently published, and already glanced at, of Disraeli to various ladies would seem to be more demonstrative and more histrionic. But the section as admitted lies, for us, on the extreme border of our province. It is too important to be wholly omitted and therefore these paragraphs have been given to it. And it may require future touching in reference to some particular writers, especially that greatest and most unhappy of all Deans of Saint Patrick, the greatest perhaps of all Deans that ever were with the excéption of John Donne—himself no small epistoler, but greatest in those verse-letters which are denied us.[1]

It is perhaps superfluous, but for completeness' sake may be permissible, to say a very little about the use of letters for purposes other than that of genuine personal communication. Indeed in doing so we are only executing the time-honoured manœuvre of returning to the point whence we set out, and bringing the wheel full circle.[2] The strictly "business" letter—which is, of course, a

[1] There is of course a class exactly opposite to the love-letter—that of more or less modified hate or at least dislike. Johnson's epistle to Chesterfield is an example of the dignified form of this; Hazlitt's to Gifford of the undignified. But considering our deserved reputation for humour we are less strong than might be expected in letters which make the supposed writer make *himself* ridiculous. Sydney Smith's "Noodle's Oration" is the sort of thing in another kind: and some of the letters in the *Spectator* class of periodical are fun in the kind itself. Defoe's *Shortest Way with the Dissenters* comes near. But we have nothing like the famous *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*, which are the very triumph of the style.

[2] See the extensive classification of the Greeks, as noticed and reproduced before.

personal communication in a way—and the "despatch" which is a form of it intended sooner or later for more general information, require no notice or at best mere mention. But in times past if not also in those present, "Letters" have been used—specially perhaps in that century of letters, the eighteenth—for purposes of definite instruction, argument, propaganda and so forth. There are obvious advantages in the form for certain of the lighter of these purposes as it is used in Montesquieu's *Lettres Persanes* or Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World.* But why Bishop Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (really valuable as they are) should have been "Letters" at all, except for fashion's sake, it is difficult to say. There is perhaps more excuse for the pamphlet, especially the political pamphlet, assuming the title of letter as it has so often done in instances from the great example of Bolingbroke and Burke downwards.[1] You have, with less unreality, the advantage of the classical "speech" addressed often to a single person, who is supposed to be specially aware of the facts or specially to need instruction and encouragement, or modified remonstrance, as to them. It was probably from these great exemplars—perhaps also aided by the custom of eighteenth century periodicals, that pamphlets of all kinds became titular epistles such as "A Letter to the deputy-manager of a Theatre Royal, London, on his lately acquired notoriety in contriving and arranging the 'Hair Powder Act'" (but this was satire), or "A letter writ by a clergyman to his neighbour

[1] The "Letter to Sir W. Windham" of the one used the "Letter to a noble Lord" of the other, have ample justification. *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, great as they are in themselves, have less claim to their title. But it was a favourite with both writers.

concerning the kingdom and the allegiance due to the King and Queen." [1]

For a last class may be taken the ever increasing body of things "written to the papers." It is unnecessary to consider the justice of a sarcastic division of mankind into "those who write to the papers and those who do not read the letters," or to discuss what men have been heard to say—that the people who write *to* papers are people who have not written *in* them. It is quite certain that, for many years past, the less frivolous kind of newspaper-correspondence has been of admitted interest and importance; indeed a paper might conceivably maintain its position after its repute has sunk in other ways, simply because more letters of importance appear in it than in others. As a source of illustrations of how to write and how not to write letters this modern development of the art could hardly be quite neglected; and it offers a curious study of various kinds. Except with very guileless writers the character-index quality is of course less certainly present than in letters written *not* for publication. A man must be, in the old Greek phrase, "either a God or a beast," if he does not prepare for print—if not exactly with a touch of "stage-fright," at any rate with the premeditation with which even stage-fright-free actors go on the stage. But it requires a great master or mistress of dissimulation to write even these letters at all frequently without a certain amount of self-revelation. And there is perhaps no more curious and interesting part of that most curious and interesting business of editing than

[1] The King was William and the Queen Mary, which limits considerably the otherwise rather illimitable "concerning the kingdom."

(when it is not merely tedious), the reading of offered correspondence. There is the pure lunatic, such as the man who for years sends despatches in a sort of cuneiform cipher, probably quite meaningless and certainly not likely to meet with a decipherer; there is the abusive person who (less piquantly than Reade in the letter quoted above) gives his opinion of your paper; the volunteer-corrector of obvious misprints; the innocent who merely wants to see his own signature in print, and who generally tries to bribe his way into it by references to "your powerful journal," etc. They are all there—waiting for the waste-paper basket.

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[1] This word is of course
English. But it has usage i

One of their main attractions is, with the same caution, their remarkable *variety*. It has been complained with a certain amount of truth that fiction, whether in prose or verse, is a little apt to fall into grooves: that all the histories are told, all the plays acted. This is undoubtedly the curse of Art, and every now and then we see it acknowledged in the most convincing manner by the frantic efforts made to be "different." But that real things and persons are never quite identical is not merely a philosophical doctrine but a practical fact. The "two peas" of one saying are never so much "alike" as the "two blades of grass" of another are unlike.

Now as letters—that is to say letters that deserve to exist at all—are bound to reproduce the personality of their writers, it will follow that a refreshing diversity must also belong to them. And as a matter of fact this will be found to be the case. Even the eighteenth century—the century of rule and class, of objection to "the streaks of the tulip," of machine-made verse, etc.,—has, except in the case of letters artificially made to pattern, shown this signally.

One last recommendation. A bad letter-writer is sure to betray himself almost everywhere, and letters are as a rule short. Most people must have attempted books of other classes, especially novels, and hoping against hope turned them over, and dipped and peeped till repeated disappointment compelled the traditional flinging to the other end of the room, or simply dropping the thing in less explosive weariness. You never need do that with letters. If a man's letters are not worth reading you will "have a confessing criminal" at once; if they are he will hardly be able to keep the quality latent whenever he goes

beyond the shortest business note. The man of one book, in the sense of having read it, is proverbially formidable but in fact too frequently a bore. The man of one letter, in the sense of having written a good one and no more, probably never existed.[1]

[1] There is one small but rather famous class of letters which perhaps should receive separate though brief notice. It is that of laconic and either intentionally or unintentionally humorous utilisations of the letter-form. Of one sort Captain Walton's " Spanish fleet taken and destroyed as per margin " is probably the most noted type: of another the equally famous rejoinder of the Highland magnate to his rival " Dear Glengarry, When you have proved yourself to be my chief, I shall be happy to admit your claim. Meanwhile I am Yours, Macdonald." In pure farce of an irreverent kind, the possibly apocryphal interchange between a Royal Duke and a Right Reverend Bishop, " Dear Cork, Please ordain Stanhope, Yours, York," and " Dear York, Stanhope's ordained. Yours, Cork," has the palm as a recognised " chestnut." But these things are only the frills if not even the froth of the subject; and those who imitate them should exercise caution in the imitation. The police-courts, and even more exalted, but still more unwholesome abodes of Justice, have sometimes been the consequences of misguided satire in letters. Even in Captain Walton's case the Spaniards are said to have endeavoured to show that his ironical laconism (which, moreover, tradition has perhaps exaggerated in form) was not strictly in accordance with fact.

APPENDIX TO INTRODUCTION

I

GREEK LETTERS.—SYNESIUS (*c.* 375-430)

ENGLISH readers may know something, from Kingsley's *Hypatia*, of the excellent bishop of Ptolemais who, at the meeting of the fourth and fifth centuries, combined the functions of neo-Platonist philosopher, Christian prelate, country gentleman, and most efficient yeomanry officer against the ancestors, or at least forerunners, of the present Senussi, who were constantly raiding his diocese and its neighbourhood. These two letters—to Hypatia herself and to his brother—show him in different, but in each case favourable lights.

LETTER CVIII. (TO HIS BROTHER)

I have already got 300 spears and as many cutlasses, though I had, even before, only half a score two-edged swords: and these long flat blades are not forged with us. But I think the cutlasses can be struck more vigorously into the enemies' bodies, and so we shall use them. And at need we shall have bludgeons—for the wild olive trees are good with us.[1] Some of our men have single-bladed axes at

[1] Wild olive, with more peaceful uses, was also the usual material for the *un*peaceful club, or quarter-staff, often iron-shod, of the ancients. It was probably like the *lathi* which the mild Hindoo takes with him to political meetings. The πέλεκυς of

their belts with which those of us who have no defensive armour shall chop their[1] shields and make them fight on equal terms. The fight will, at a guess, come off to-morrow: for when some of the foe had fallen in with scouts of ours and pursuing them at their best speed had found them too good to catch, they bade them tell us what pleased us mightily—if indeed we may no more have to wander in the footsteps of those fellows who made off into the wastes of the interior. For they said they were going to stay where they were and wanted to find out what sort of fellows *we* were, who dared to separate ourselves so many days' journey from our own place that we might fight with men of war, nomads in way of life, and whose civil polity was like our discipline in war-time. Therefore, as one who by God's help shall to-morrow conquer—nay, conquer again if needful (for I would say nothing of bad omen) I commit to thee the care of my children: for it is fitting that thou, their uncle, shouldest carry over thine affection to them.

LETTER CXXIV

"But if oblivion be the lot of the dead in Hades yet will I, even there, remember" my dear Hypatia. Beset as I am by the sufferings of my country and sick, as I see daily weapons of war about me and men slaughtered like altar-victims; drawing as I do breath infected by rotting corpses; expecting myself a similar fate, (for who can be hopeful when the very atmosphere is weighed down and dusky with the shadow of carnivorous birds?) yet do I

the ancients was generally double-bladed, hence the limitation here. This would be lighter and more convenient to carry in the belt.

[1] Of course "the enemies'."

cling to my country. For what else would my feeling be, born and bred as I am, and with the not ignoble tombs of my fathers before my eyes? For thee alone does it seem to me that I could neglect my country, and if I could get leisure, force myself to run away.[1]

LATIN LETTERS.—PLINY (62-114)

The most famous letters of the younger Pliny are those which describe his country houses, that which gives account of his uncle's death in the great eruption of Vesuvius, and his correspondence with Trajan. But the first mentioned are rather long and require a good deal of technical annotation;[2] the second is to be found in many books; and the letters which make up the third (except those concerning Christianity, which are again to be found in many places) are mostly short and on points of business merely. The one I have chosen is extremely characteristic, in two respects, of the author and of Roman ways generally. It shows Pliny's good-nature and right feeling, but it shows also a certain "priggishness" with which he has been specially and personally charged, but which, to speak frankly, he shared with a great many of his famous countrymen. Priggishness was almost unknown among the Greeks—though one may suspect its presence among those Spartans who have told so few tales of themselves. But

[1] Synesius addresses his letters to Hypatia τῇ φιλοσόφῳ—"To *the* Philosophess." This contains at least two of the unapproachable "portmanteau" words in which Greek, and especially late Greek abounds—φιλοχωρῶν, "loving one's country," and μεταναστεύειν, a rare and complicated compound in which I have ventured to see a hint of ironic intention. He feels that he will be a sort of shirker or deserter (μετὰ often imparts this meaning) but he will be coming to *her*.

[2] This necessity of annotating beyond suitable limits was what prevented me, after due re-reading for the purpose, from giving any letter of Cicero's.

it flourished at Rome, and was one of Rome's many—and one of her worst—legacies to us moderns. Secondly, the letter is amusing because one thinks what an English judge would surely think and would probably say, if counsel for a lady were to inform the court *uberius et latius* what an extremely good opinion that lady's father had of him, the learned speaker. A minor but still interesting difference is in Pliny's slight hesitation about taking a brief against a consul-elect. The subtleties of Roman etiquette are endless.

Plinius to his Asinius Gallus—Health

You both advise[1] and ask me to take up the cause of Corellia in her absence against C. Caecilius, Consul elect. I am obliged to you for advising me but I complain of your *asking*. I ought to be advised that I may know the fact, but not asked to do what it would be most disgraceful for me *not* to do. Could I doubt about protecting the daughter of Corellius? True, there is between me and him against whom you call on me, not exactly close friendship but still some friendship. There is also to be taken into account the man's worth and the honour to which he is destined, a thing which I ought to hold in the greater respect that I have myself already enjoyed it. For it is natural that things which one has oneself attained, one should wish to be regarded with the greatest respect. But when I think that I am to help Corellius' daughter, all this appears idle and empty. I seem to see the man than whom our age had no one more dignified, more pious, of an acuter mind; the man whom, when I had begun to like him out of admiration I admired more, contrary

[1] *Admoneo* in Latin not unfrequently has our commercial sense of "advise" = inform, or remind of a fact. It will be remembered that in Elizabethan English this sense was not limited to business, as in "Art thou avisèd of that."

to what usually happens, the more thoroughly I knew him. For I did know him thoroughly; he kept nothing hid from me, neither jocular nor serious, neither sad nor glad. I was quite a young man: but already he held me in honour and I will dare to say respect—as if I were his contemporary. He gave me his vote and interest in my standings for honours; he, when I entered upon them, was my introducer and companion; when I carried them out, my adviser and guide. In fact, in every business of mine, though he was an old man and in weak health, he was as forward as if he were young and strong. How much he furthered my reputation, privately, publicly, and even with the Chief of the State! For when by chance, in the presence of the Emperor Nerva, the conversation had turned on young men of worth, and several persons spoke in praise of me, he kept silence for a little, which gave him the more authority. Then in the weighty manner you know, "I must needs," he said, "say all the less about Secundus [1] because he never does anything but by my advice." By saying this he gave me the credit (which it would have been extravagant in me to hope for) of never doing anything in other than the wisest way, seeing that I always acted on the advice of the wisest man. Moreover, when dying, he said to his daughter, as she is wont to declare, "I have provided you, as if I were myself to live longer, many friends: but for the chief of them Secundus and Cornutus." Now when I remember this, I see I must take care not in any way to disappoint the trust in me of this most fore-thoughtful man. Therefore I will come to Corellia's help without the least delay and will not refuse to undergo inconveniences: though I think I shall secure not merely pardon but even praise from the very person

[1] The younger Pliny's full name was C. Plinius *Secundus*.

who as you say is bringing a new action as against a woman, if it should happen to me to say these same things in court more amply and fully than the narrow room of a letter permits, either to excuse or indeed commend myself. Farewell.

LETTER OF THE "DARK" AGES

SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS (431?-482-4)

CAIUS SOLLIUS SIDONIUS APOLLINARIS is one of the most interesting figures of the troubled and obscure period intervening between the fall of the Roman Empire *proper* and the rise of mediaeval Europe. He was born at Lyons, married Papianilla, daughter of Flavius Avitus, who was to be one of the ephemeral "Emperors" of the West and the Decadence, but was not injured by his father-in-law's dethronement, and enjoyed various civil honours and posts. In 471, though a married layman, he was peremptorily made a bishop, and accordingly took orders, put away his wife, and discharged his sacred duties as creditably as he had discharged his profane ones. Sidonius was a not contemptible poet, and an interesting letter-writer. Like most literary men of his class he was given to what we call flattery; and this Ecdicius, of whom he made a sort of Dark Age Admirable Crichton, was his brother-in-law, an Emperor's son, and Count or Duke (the titles were often interchangeable) of the district. But it is fair to say that Gregory of Tours, the accepted historian of the period, and living only in the next century, makes the exploit over the Goths even more signal—for he reduces the troopers to *ten*. The Arverni (inhabitants of Auvergne and its neighbourhood) were the strongest tribe in Southern Gaul when the Romans first came into contact with them, retained much prominence in Caesar's time, and had not lost individuality, if they had lost independence, by this (5th) century. The mixture of "Arms" and the "Gown" is noteworthy.

Book III. Letter III

Sidonius to his Ecdicius—Health

If ever, now you are longed for by my Arvernians, whose love for you subdues them remarkably, and indeed for all sorts of reasons. First, because a man's native land has the greatest part in creating affection for him.[1] Then, because in your time you are about the only mortal who was longed for before his birth as much as he was rejoiced in after it . . . I say nothing of such things—common to all, but no mean incitement to affection—as that you crawled as a child on the same turf with them. I pass over the grass which you first trod, the river you first swam, the woods you broke through in hunting. I leave out the fact that it was here you first played ball[2] and backgammon,[3] that you hawked, coursed, rode, shot with the bow. I omit the fact that for the sake of your boyish presence students of letters came hither from all parts; and that it was due to you as an individual that our nobility, anxious to shed the slough of Celtic speech, imbued itself now with the style of oratory, now with the measures of the Muse. And this specially kindled the love of the community[4] that you forbade those whom you had already made Latins[5] to remain barbarians.[6] For it could never slip the memory of our citizens what and how great you seemed, to every age and rank and sex

[1] Among other natives of course.

[2] Doubtless the game still played in Italy (*pallone*) and the South of France, with a wooden hand-guard strapped to the arm.

[3] *Pyrgus* is not exactly backgammon. The Romans had a sort of combined dice-box and board—the latter having a kind of tower fixed on the side with interior steps or stops, among which the dice tumbled and twisted before they fell out.

[4] *Universitas*: but though the context seems tempting, it is too early for "university" as a translation.

[5] *I.e.* in citizenship. [6] *I.e.* in speech.

on the half-ruined mounds of our walls, when, accompanied by scarcely eighteen horsemen, you cut your way through some thousands of Goths in full daylight and (which posterity will hardly believe) in the open field. A well trained army stood aghast at the sound of your name and the sight of your person: so that the leaders of the enemy, in their astonishment, hardly knew how many were their followers, how few yours. Their line was then withdrawn to the brow of a steep hill; it had before been gathered together to storm, but on your appearance was not deployed for battle. Meanwhile you, having slain some of their best men whom not sloth but courage had made the rearmost of the troop, occupied the level ground alone, though such a fight gave you not so many comrades as your table is wont to contain guests. And when you returned to the town at your leisure what came to meet you in the way of official compliments, applause, tears, rejoicings can be better guessed than described. One might see in the crammed halls of the spacious palace that happy ovation for your thronged return. Some caught up the dust of your footsteps to kiss it: others took out the horses' curbs stained with blood and foam; others prepared the stands for the saddles drenched with the horses' sweat; others, when you were about to put off your helmet, unbuckled the clasps of its plated chin-straps, or busied themselves with unlacing your greaves. Yet others counted the notches on the swords, blunted with slaughter, or measured with livid [1] fingers the rings of the corslets, slashed or pierced by weapons.[2]

[1] Why *livescentibus* I am not sure. "Bruised by the rough mail"? But Lucretius has *digiti livescunt*: and Sidonius, like other poets of other decadences, is apt to borrow the phrases of his great predecessors.

[2] Sidonius has nearly as much more of this curious story: but

EARLY MEDIAEVAL LETTER (Twelfth Century)

Of the other persons mentioned in this letter besides the widowed Duchess and King Louis VII., the first is Ralph, Count of (Peronne and) Vermandois, a leper. The lady's name was Eleanor, and she also was probably a widow; the Duchess's son Hugh was third of that name as Duke of Burgundy Ivo, Count of Soissons, was the guardian of the Count of Vermandois, incapacitated legally by his plague. The proposed marriage did not come off. The business-like tone of the letter will only surprise those who do not really know the "Ages of Romance." I owe the selection of it to my friend the Rev. W. Hunt, D.Litt., who came to my aid in the dearth of books of this period which circumstances imposed on me.

To Louis [1] most excellent King of the Franks by the grace of God, and her most beloved Lord, Mary, Duchess of Burgundy—health and due respect. It is known to your Majesty that my son is your liegeman, and, if it please you, your kinsman also. Whatsoever he can do is yours: and if he could do more it were yours. And so I all the more confidently ask your highest affection for my son. For it has been told me that Count Ralph of Peronne has a certain marriageable sister who, as has been reported to me and her own people, would be a suitable

the picture of the excitable Celts mobbing their heroes is vivid enough to make a good stopping-place. If things really went as described, one must suppose that a sudden panic came on the Goths, and that they took Ecdicius and his handful of troopers as merely *éclaireurs* of a sally in force, and drew back to the higher ground to resist it.

[1] His own experience of marriage cannot have made the subject wholly agreeable to him: for he was, it may not be quite impertinent to remind the reader, the first husband of Eleanor of Guienne.

wife for my son. For this reason, most beloved Lord, I and he ask that you would look to this matter yourself and speak about it to the Count of Soissons, and settle how this marriage may be contracted. You must know that though my son might marry in another kingdom, I greatly prefer that he should take a wife in yours, rather than in any other. The nearer he becomes connected with you the more will he be yours and altogether a profit to you.

ENGLISH LETTERS

THE PASTONS. FIFTEENTH CENTURY

FEW families in England have achieved a permanent
"place i' the story" after such a curious fashion as the
Pastons of Paston (Pastons "of that ilk") in Norfolk.
They were not exactly "great people" and no member
of the family was of very eminent distinction in any walk
of life, though they had judges, soldiers, and sailors etc.
among them, and though, some time before Monday, in
became extinct, its representative we met together afore
with the title of Earl of Yarmouth. orning and fought that
people in the troublesome times of nd there we took six of
obtained a good deal of property, men about four twenties
Sir John Fastolf, noted in the Fr
by posterity (there seems to have ght sore; and there were
between them except an a twelve twenties and hurt a five
false in both cases, an
relation of names) wit me at the first aboarding of us, we
they produced, recei e hundred ton, and I was left therein
which, despite the
were partially p eared that "My Lord's" action was rather
more fully a h "Spanish Fleet" was of merchantmen ("con-
Although (s aps) on their way to the North with iron etc. for
they are etc., and we were not definitely at war with Spain.
they give y the IV. of Castile was an ally of France. Warwick
experiences been appointed "Captain of Calais," and it was a
affairs) than glish idea that anything not English in the Channel
till quite mo e. Warwick's conduct was warmly welcomed in
put the finger

I have selected from a great mass of documents two—one of love and one of war according to the good old division. John Jernyngan's letter to Margaret Mauteby—wife of John Paston, and one of the most notable and businesslike, though not the least affectionate of wives and mothers—is interesting for its combination of the two motives (were there also *two* " Mistress Blanches " ?) and for the delightfully English frankness of its confession that " we were well and truly beat." On the other hand, that of Miss Margery Brews to John Paston the youngest (the John named above had two sons of his own name) is one of the most agreeable pieces of " plain and holy innocence," as Miranda calls it, on record. It is immediately preceded in the collection by another in which she is equally loving, and quotes some of the shockingly bad fifteenth century verse. One regrets to say that her " Valentine " had, apparently, more than one string to his bow at the moment. However, after vicissitudes in the " matter," as she delicately calls

Praying you that it please you for to send me word if my father was at Norwich with you at this Trinitymas or no, and how the matter doth between my mistress Blanche Witchingham and me and if ye suppose that it shall be brought about or no, and how ye feel my father, if he be well willing thereto or no; praying you lowly that I may be recommend(ed) lowly to my mistress Arblaster's wife, and to my mistress Blanche her daughter specially.

Right worshipful cousin, if it please you for to hear of such tidings as we have here, the embassy of Burgundy shall come to Calais the Saturday after Corpus Christi day, as men say, 500 horse of them. Moreover on Trinity Sunday in the morning came tidings unto my Lord of Warwick that there were 28 sails of Spaniards on the sea, and whereof there was 16 great ships of forecastle. And then my Lord [1] went and manned 5 ships of forecastle and three carvells, and four pinnaces, and on the Monday, in the morning after Trinity Sunday, we met together afore Calais at 4 at the clock in the morning and fought that (*sic*) gether till 10 at the clock. And there we took six of their ships and they slew of our men about four twenties and hurt a two hundred of us right sore; and there were slain on their part about twelve twenties and hurt a five hundred of them.

And (it) happened me at the first aboarding of us, we took a ship of three hundred ton, and I was left therein

[1] It is to be feared that "My Lord's" action was rather piratical. The "Spanish Fleet" was of merchantmen ("convoyed" perhaps) on their way to the North with iron etc. for fish, silk, etc., and we were not definitely at war with Spain. But Henry the IV. of Castile was an ally of France. Warwick had just been appointed "Captain of Calais," and it was a general English idea that anything not English in the Channel was fair prize. Warwick's conduct was warmly welcomed in London.

and 23 men with me; and they fought so sore that our men were fain to leave them, and then come they and aboarded[1] the ship that I was in and there I was taken, and was prisoner with them 6 hours, and was delivered again for their men that were taken before. And as men say, there was not so great a battle upon the sea this forty winters. And forsooth we were well and truly beat: and my Lord hath sent for more ships, and like to fight together again in haste.

No more I write unto you at this time, but that it please you for to recommend me unto my right reverend and worshipful cousin your husband, and mine uncle Gurney, and to mine aunt his wife and to all good masters and friends where it shall please you; and after the writing I have from you, I shall be at you in all haste. Written on Corpus Christi day in great haste by your own humble servant and cousin,

JOHN JERNYNGAN.

2. LETTER 784 (GAIRDNER)

Date Feb. 1477

RIGHT worshipful and well-beloved Valentine, in my most humble wise I recommend me unto you. And heartily I thank you for the letter which that ye send me by John Beckerton, whereby I am informed and know that ye be purposed to come to Topcroft in short time, and without any errand or matter but only to have a conclusion of the matter between my father and you. I would be most glad of any creature in life so that

[1] This use of "abord" and that just before are slightly different derivatives of the French *aborder*, which means to "approach," "accost," "come together with" as well as to "board" in the naval sense. The first use here is evidently of the more general, the second of the particular kind.

the matter might grow to effect. And there as ye say, an ye come and find the matter no more towards you than ye did aforetime, ye would no more put my father and my lady my mother to no cost nor business, for that cause, a good while after—which causeth mine heart to be full heavy: and if that ye come, and the matter take to none effect, then should I be much more sorry and full of heaviness.

And as for myself I have done and understood in the matter that I can and may, as good [1] knoweth: and I let you plainly understand that my father will no more money part withal in that behalf but £100 and one mark which is right far from the accomplishment of your desire.

Wherefore if that ye could be content with that good, and my poor person, I would be the merriest maiden on ground. And if ye think not yourself so satisfied, or that ye might have much more good, as I have understood by you afore—good, true, and loving Valentine,[2] that ye take no such labour upon you as to come more for that matter but let it pass and never more be spoken of, as I may be your true lover and bedeswoman [3] during my life.

No more unto you at this time but Almighty Jesus preserve you both body and soul.

By your Valentine,

M. B.

[1] This may be a mere mis-spelling of "God," or a sort of euphemism like the modern "thank *goodness*!" to avoid the more sacred name.

[2] "I would" or "take care" or something similar to be supplied to make a somewhat softened imperative.

[3] One who prays for you.

ROGER ASCHAM (1515-1568)

ALTHOUGH the old phrase about "the schoolmaster being abroad" has never before had anything like the amount of applicableness which it now possesses, there is perhaps still a certain prejudice against schoolmasters. Indeed even some who have more than served time in that capacity will admit that it is a dangerous employment, profession, or vocation. But if all of us had been ever, or ever would try to be, like Roger Ascham, our class would never have deserved, or would victoriously wipe off, any obloquy. It was extraordinary good quality, or more extraordinary good fortune, that made the same man write *Toxophilus* and *The Schoolmaster*. And there need hardly be any admission of possible good luck as causing, though some certainly helped, his performance as a letter-writer. Something was said before as to the importance of his "getting to English" in this matter. But it may be permissible to remind, or perhaps even inform, some readers of the curious combination which made this importance. As a Renaissance scholar; as a College tutor before the middle of the sixteenth century; as a Secretary of Embassy on the Continent; and as Latin Secretary at Court, he was positively *un*likely to favour the vernacular. Nor could anyone be a warmer or wiser lover of the classics than he was. But what he, being all these things, did for English was all the more influential, while the manner of his doing it could hardly be bettered.

Ascham's letters being partly in English and partly in Latin, there is a certain temptation to translate one of the latter and put it side by side with one of the former. But

ght over the compass of vines. And surely this wine of hene is so good, so natural, so temperate, so ever like self, as can be wished for man's use. I was afraid when came out of England to miss beer; but I am more fraid when I shall come into England, that I cannot lack is wine.

It is wonder to see how many castles stand on the tops these rocks unwinable. The three bishops electors, olen, Trevers and Mayence; be the princes almost of hole Rhene. The lansgrave hath goodly castles upon hene which the emperor cannot get. The palatine of hene is also a great lord on this river, and hath his name a castle standing in the midst of Rhene on a rock. here be also goodly isles in Rhene, so full of walnut trees at they cannot be spent with eating, but they make vile f them. In some of these isles stand fair abbeys and unneries wonderfully pleasant. The stones that hang high over Rhene be very much of that stone that you se to write on in tables; every poor man's house there covered with them.

To Cecil [extract]

Brussels March 24. 1553

IF I should write oft, ye might think me too bold: and if I did leave off, ye might judge me either to forget your gentleness, or to mistrust your good will, who ath already so bound me unto you, as I shall rather forget myself, and wish God also to forget me, than not labour with all diligence and service to apply myself wholly to our will and purpose; and that ye shall well know how uch I assure myself on your goodness, I will pass a piece f good manners, and be bold to borrow a little of your

small leisure from your weighty affairs in the commonwealth. Therefore, if my letters shall find you at any leisure, they will trouble you a little in telling you ate length, as I promised in my last letters delivered unto you by Mr. Francis Yaxeley, why I am more desirous to have your help for my stay at Cambridge still than for any other kind of living elsewhere. I having now some experience of life led at home and abroad, and knowing what I can do most fitly, and how I would live most gladly, do well perceive there is no such quietness in England, nor pleasure in strange countries, as even in St. John's college, to keep company with the Bible, Plato, Aristotle, Demosthenes, and Tully. Which my choice of quietness is not purposed to lie in idleness, nor constrained by a wilful nature, because I will not or can not serve elsewhere, when I trust I could apply myself to mo kinds of life than I hope any need shall ever drive me to seek, but only because in choosing aptly for myself I might bring some profit to many others. And in this mine opinion I stand the more gladly, because it is grounded upon the judgment of worthy Mr. Denny. For the summer twelvemonth before he departed, dinner and supper he had me commonly with him, whose excellent wisdom, mingled with so pleasant mirth, I can never forget: emonges many other talks he would say oft unt me, if two duties did not command him to serve, the his prince, the other his wife, he would surely become a student in St. John's, saying, "The Court, Mr. Ascham, is a place so slippery, that duty never so well done, is not a staff stiff enough to stand by always very surely, where ye shall many times reap most unkindness where ye have sown greatest pleasures, and those also ready to do you most hurt to whom you never intended to think any

harm." Which sentences I heard very gladly then, and felt them soon after myself to be true. Thus I, first ready by mine own nature, then moved by good counsel, after driven by ill fortune, lastly called by quietness, thought it good to couch myself in Cambridge again. And in very deed, too many be pluckt from thence before they be ripe, though I myself am withered before I be gathered, and yet not so for that I have stood too long, but rather because the fruit which I bear is so very small. Yet seeing the goodly crop of Mr. Cheke is almost clean carried from thence, and I in a manner alone of that time left a standing straggler, peradventure though my fruit be very small, yet because the ground from whence it sprung was so good, I may yet be thought somewhat fit for seed, when all you the rest are taken up for better store, wherewith the king and his realm is now so nobly served. And in such a scarcity both of those, that were worthily called away when they were fit, and of such as unwisely part from thence, before they be ready, I dare now bolden myself, when the best be gone, to do some good among the mean that do tarry, trusting that my diligence shall deal with my disability, and the rather because the desire of shooting is so well shot away in me, either ended by time or left off for better purpose. Yet I do amiss to mislike shooting too much, which hath been hitherto my best friend, and even now looking back to the pleasure which I found in it, and perceiving small repentence to follow after it, by Plato's judgment I may think well of it. No, it never called me to go from my book, but it made both wit the lustier, and will the readier, to run to it again, and perchance going back sometimes from learning may serve even as well as it doth at leaping, to pass some of those which keep always their standing at their book.

LADY MARY SIDNEY (?[1]-1586)

THIS "old Molly," as she so agreeably calls herself, was very unfortunate in her father (that intrusive holder for a short time of the title of Northumberland, who was offensive in success and abject in adversity) and not too lucky in her brother, Leicester. But she must have been far too good for her own breed; she had an excellent husband, Sir Henry Sidney, Deputy of Ireland and President of Wales, one of Elizabeth's best deserving and worst treated servants, and she was the mother of "Astrophel" and Astrophel's sister. "One has known persons more unfortunate," as a famous phrase of a French poem not very long after her own time has it. And she must have thoroughly deserved good fortune: for her letters show her as one of the best of wives and mothers (if not of spellers): though it is quite possible that she might not have made a good jurywoman or a good member of parliament. As her husband was not merely governor (repeatedly and with such success as was possible) of Ireland, but "President of Wales," they usually, when in England but not at Court or at Penshurst, lived at Ludlow Castle and so enjoyed two of the most beautiful homes in the country. But Sir Henry in these and other functions had seas of trouble, great expenses, and according to "Gloriana's" wont, very small thanks for it all. He is said, indeed, to have had his life shortened by weariness and worry. But his son and daughter [2] may have been a comfort to him: and his wife

[1] Her birth-date does not seem to be known, but she was married in 1551.

[2] He had another, of the (for an English girl) very unusual name of "Ambros[z]ia" who died unmarried, at twenty.

must have been so. The letter itself, as will be seen, is not to himself but to his secretary: and there was more correspondence on the subject of their lodging and its difficulties. Lady Mary was not well, and there must be a place to see friends, and the Queen might come in! The original letter[1] is better spelt than others of hers, the principal curiosity being the form "hit" for "it," which, however, is by no means peculiar.

5. To EDWARD MOLINEUX, ESQ.

YOU have used the matter very well; but we must do more yet for the good dear Lord [her husband] than let him be thus dealt withal. Hampton Court I never yet knew so full as there were not spare rooms in it, when it has been thrice better filled than at the present it is. But some would be sorry, perhaps, my Lord should have so sure a footing in the Court. Well, all may be as well when the good God will. The whilst, I pray let us do what we may for our Lord's ease and quiet. Whereunto I think if you go to my Lord Howard, and in my Lord's name also move his Lordship to shew his brother my Lord, (as they call each other)—to show him a cast of his office[2] and that it should not be known allege your former causes, I think he will find out some place to serve that purpose. And also if you go to Mr Bowyer,[3] the gentleman-Usher, and tell him his mother requireth

[1] Most kindly copied for me by the Rev. W. Hunt from Arthur Collins's *Sydney Papers*.

[2] An agreeable phrase, not in the least obsolete, though I have known ignorant persons who thought it so. The "office" was that of Lord Chamberlain; the holder was Lord Howard of Effingham, afterwards famous in the Armada fights.

[3] See *Kenilworth* (chap. xvi.), where Scott brings him in as experiencing Gloriana's extreme uncertainty of temper.

him (which is myself) to help my Lord with some one room, but only for the dispatch of the multitude of Welsh and Irish people that follow him; and that you will give your word in my Lord's behalf and mine, it shall not be accounted as a lodging[1] or known of, I believe he will make what shift he can: you must assure him it is but for the day-time for his business, as indeed it is.

As for my brother's answer of[2] my stay here for five or six days, he knows I have ventured far already with so long absence, and am ill thought of for it,[3] so as that may not be. But when the worst is known, old Lord Harry and his old Moll will do as well as they can in parting[4] like good friends the small portion allotted our long service in Court, which as little as it is, seems something too much.[5] And this being all I can say to the matter, farewell, Mr. Ned.

In haste this Monday 1578,

your assured loving mistress and friend,

M. SYDNEY.

If all this will not serve, prove[6] Mr Huggins, for I know my Lord would not for no good be destitute in this time for some convenient place for his followers and friends to resort to him, which in the case I am in, is not possible to be in *my* chamber till after sunset, when the dear good Lord shall be, as best becomes him, Lord of his own.

[1] *I.e.* a permanent one such as Hampton Court affords to some.

[2] "About"?

[3] Either by the Queen herself, whose touchiness is well known, or by jealous and mischief-making fellow courtiers.

[4] "Sharing." [5] "Is grudged." [6] We should say "try."

GEORGE CLIFFORD EARL OF CUMBERLAND (1558-1605)

THIS not very fortunate or wholly blameless but very remarkable and representative person was the third holder of the earldom and the sixteenth of the famous barony of Clifford. He was great-grandson of Wordsworth's "Shepherd Lord"; father of Anne Countess of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery (pupil of Daniel the poet and a typical great lady of her time); one of the foremost of Elizabeth's privateering courtiers; one of the chief victims of her caprice and parsimony; a magnificent noble, but a great spendthrift, something of a libertine, never unkindly but hardly ever wise. This remarkable deathbed letter (the giving of which depended on the kindness of Dr. G. C. Williamson of Hampstead, author of the *Life and Voyages of G. Clifford, 3rd Earl of Cumberland* (Cambridge University Press, 1920), in which it appeared, pp. 270-1), pretty well explains itself. "Sweet Meg," his wife, was Lady Margaret Russell, daughter of the Earl of Bedford. The pair were on very affectionate terms for many years: but had latterly been estranged by certain infidelities on the Earl's part and by money disputes and difficulties, so that when his last illness attacked him Lady Cumberland was not with him. She was not, however, proof against this repentant appeal: but returned with her daughter. Both were present at his death in the Savoy soon after he wrote. He had made, personally or by deputy, ten if not twelve voyages against the Spaniards, and though there was a good deal of mismanagement about them he took Porto

Rico in one; captured, but made little profit out of, an enormously valuable prize, the *Madre de Dios*, in another; gave the warning which enabled Lord Thomas Howard to escape, but which Sir Richard Grenville refused to take "at Flores, in the Azores"; and built at his own expense, the largest privateer then or perhaps ever constructed, the *Malice Scourge*—for the remarkable subsequent history of which, see Mr. David Hannay's article, "*The Saga of a Ship*," in *Blackwood*, May, 1921.

6.

SWEET AND DEAR MEG,

Bear[1] with, I pray thee, the short and unapt setting together of these my last lines, a token of true kindness, which I protest cometh out of an unfeigned heart of love to thee. For whose content, and to make satisfaction for the wrongs done to thee I have, since I saw thee more desired to return than for any other earthly cause. But being so low brought that, without God's miraculous favour, there is no great likelihood of it I, by this, if so it please God that I shall not, in earnestness make my last requests, which as ever thou lovest me lying so, I pray thee perform for me being dead. First, in greedy earnestness I desire thee not to offend God in grieving too much at His disposing of me: but let my assured hope that He hath done it for the saving of my soul rather comfort thee, considering that we ought most to rejoice, when we see a thing that it is either for the good of our souls or of our friends. And further I beg

[1] There is, as often, little or no punctuation in the original, of which Dr. Williamson's beautiful book gives a facsimile. I have ventured to adjust that of the printed text, here and there, to bring out the meaning.

of thee that thou wilt take, as I have meant, in kindness the course I have set down for disposing of my estate and things left behind. Which truly, if I have not dealt most kindly with thee in, I am mistaken, and as ever thou lovest, (which I know thou hast done faithfully and truly) sweet Meg, let neither old conceit, new opinion, nor false lying tale, make thee fall to hard opinion nor suit with my brother. For this I protest now, when I tremble to speak that which upon any just colour may be turned to a lie, thou hast conceived wrong of him, for his nature is sweet, and though wrong conceit might well have urged him, yet he hath never to my knowledge said or done anything to harm thee or mine, but with tears hath often bemoaned himself to me that he could not devise how to make thee conceive rightly of him. And lastly, before the presence of God, I command thee, and in the nearest love of my heart I desire thee, to take great care that sweet Nan [1] whom God bless, may be carefully brought up in the fear of God, not to delight in worldly vanities, which I too well know be but baits to draw her out of the heavenly kingdom. And I pray thee thank thy kind uncle and aunt for her (?) and their many kindnesses to me. Thus, out of the bitter and greedy desire of a repentant heart, begging thy pardon for any wrong that ever in my life I did thee, I commend these my requests to thy wonted

[1] Lady Anne was at this time only 15. She seems to have been fond of her father and proud of him: nor is there any direct evidence that the fear of God was not in her. But she had no fear of man: and no excessive respect for her father's will. During the lives of her uncle Francis and her cousin Henry, 4th and 5th Earls, she fought it hard at law: and at last, Henry dying without issue, and the title lapsing, came into possession of the great Clifford estates in the North. She lived to be 86, and was masterful all her days.

and undeserved kind wifely and lovely consideration, my body to God's disposing and my love (soul?) to His merciful commisseration.

Thine as wholly as man was ever woman's,

GEORGE CUMBERLAND.

To my dear wife, the Countess of Cumberland, give this, of whom, from the bottom of my heart in the presence of God, I ask forgiveness for all the wrongs I have done her.

JOHN DONNE (1573-1631)

"THE first poet in the world for some things,"—as Ben Jonson, who nevertheless did not like his metric, thought he would perish for not being understood, and perhaps did not understand him—called Donne with justice, might not be thought likely to be among the first letter-writers. The marvellous lightning-flashes of genius in a dark night of context which illuminate his poetry and his sermons, can hardly be expected—would indeed be almost out of place—in ordinary letter-writing. Moreover, Donne is, perhaps, with Browne, the most characteristic exponent of that magnificent seventeenth century style which accommodates itself ill to merely commonplace matters.

Browne, a younger man by an entire generation who lived far into the age of Dryden, could drop this style when he chose: with Donne it was rather the skin—if not even the very flesh and bone and all but spirit—than the cloak of his thought. Nevertheless there is no exact contemporary of his—and certainly none possessing anything like his literary power—who deserves selection as a representative of his own school and time better than he does; and there is something in him which adds distinction to any company in which he appears. As mentioned in the Introduction, his verse-epistles were even more noteworthy, but in prose he is noteworthy enough.

The batch of letters here chosen was most fortunately preserved by Izaak Walton, who published the first of them in the life not of Donne but of George Herbert, while the rest were "added" to it in 1670.[1] The lady to whom they

[1] Mr. Gosse (who has inserted them in his *Life and Letters of Donne*) is perhaps right in putting letter 7 last. I give no

were written, Magdalen Newport by maiden name, was mother not only of the pious and poetical George, but of Edward Lord Herbert of Cherbury, himself not a very bad poet but by no means in the usual sense pious, a very great coxcomb, and a hero chiefly by his own report. His mother, however, seems to have been one of those "elect ladies" who were among the chief glories of England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and were fortunately numerous. After her widowhood she lived at Oxford for some time, but seems to have moved to London when Donne, about 1607, wrote these letters. He was himself living at Mitcham (spelt "Michin" in one letter), not yet famous for golf though perhaps already for lavender. Later he visited her at Montgomery Castle, the famous seat of the Herberts. She is said to have been very beautiful, and the subtle touch of not in the least fatuous or foppish "devotion" is most agreeable.

7. To the Lady Magdalen Herbert

MADAM,

Your favours to me are everywhere. I use them, and have them. I enjoy them at London, and leave them there: and yet find them at Mitcham. Such riddles as these become things inexpressible: and such is your goodness. I was almost sorry to find your servant here this day, because I was loath to have any witness of my not coming home last night, and indeed of my coming this morning. But my not coming was

opinion on this but merely keep the order in which they originally appeared in the text and in an appendix to the *Life of Herbert* (1670 edit.). I am not certain to which "first" the "second" in letter 9 refers. "Bevis of Hampton" generally for "knight errant"; "Legier," a *resident* Ambassador; "States" in the plural—always then "the Dutch"; *Snake*lessness is more often assigned to Ireland than spiderlessness.

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To the worthiest Lady, Mrs. MAGDALEN HERBER r)

MADAM,

This is my second Letter, in which though I cannot tell you what is good, yet this is the
g(orst, that I must be a great part of it; yet to me, that
B recompensed, because you must be mingled. After
en knew you were gone (for I must, little less than accus-
ng gly tell you, I knew not you would go) I sent my first
ju tter, like a *Bevis* of *Hampton*, to seek Adventures. This
wo I came to Town, and to the best part of it, your House;
to ush memory is a State-cloth and Presence; which
e, though you be away; though I need not seek
which I have about and within me. There,
my accusation, yet anything to which your
(MITCHAM July rdon; yet I would not burn my first Letter,
reat destiny no small passage can be omitted
TO THE LAD o in my resolution of writing almost daily
have no link of the Chain broke by me,
Her of your name, etters interpret one another, and
Bethina was, anenber can give them weight. If I had
An active faith soid Instructions to do you the service
That she once kdor here, I could say something of the
The Resurrection of the States, and such things. But
Delivered of her, e not only a World alone, but the
Loath to believe orld your self, nothing can be added,
But think these will sustain myself with the honour
Increase their numb
To their devotion, add your inn*dinary*
Take so much of the example as the
The latter half—and in some recomp JOHN DONNE.
That they did harbour Christ Himself—a
Harbour these Hymns, to His dear Name

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"devotion" is most agreeable.
able, than that
cause you are

7. To the Lady Magdalen Herbert t is a wretched
harmlessness.

Madam,
out. I am to my
Your favours to me a as to his Wife. I can
them, and have them. I terpretable word as a
and leave them there: and yet fin here is this good use,
Such riddles as these become thing But, *Madam*, you
such is your goodness. I was alm e there can belong to
servant here this day, because I you be no good hearer,
witness of my not coming home ave in them one part
of my coming this morning. But you.

opinion on this but merely *worthiest Servant*
appeared in the text *Except your accepting*
(1670 edit.). I am *have mended him*
letter 9 refers.
errant"; "L John Donne.
plural—alw
assigned t July 11, 1607.

JOHN DONNE (1573-1631)

9. *To the worthiest Lady, Mrs.* MAGDALEN HERBERT

MADAM,

This is my second Letter, in which though I cannot tell you what is good, yet this is the worst, that I must be a great part of it; yet to me, that is recompensed, because you must be mingled. After I knew you were gone (for I must, little less than accusingly tell you, I knew not you would go) I sent my first Letter, like a *Bevis* of *Hampton*, to seek Adventures. This day I came to Town, and to the best part of it, your House; for your memory is a State-cloth and Presence; which I reverence, though you be away; though I need not seek that there which I have about and within me. There, though I found my accusation, yet anything to which your hand is, is a pardon; yet I would not burn my first Letter, because as in great destiny no small passage can be omitted or frustrated, so in my resolution of writing almost daily to you, I would have no link of the Chain broke by me, both because my Letters interpret one another, and because only their number can give them weight. If I had your Commission and Instructions to do you the service of a Legier Ambassador here, I could say something of the Countess of *Devon*: of the States, and such things. But since to you, who are not only a World alone, but the Monarchy of the World your self, nothing can be added, especially by me; I will sustain myself with the honour of being

Your Servant Extraordinary
And without place

JOHN DONNE.

LONDON
July 23, 1607

10. *To the worthiest Lady, Mrs.* MAGDALEN HERBERT

MADAM,

As we must die before we can have full glory and happiness, so before I can have this degree of it, as to see you by a Letter, I must almost die, that is, come to *London*, to plaguy *London* ; a place full of danger, and vanity, and vice, though the Court be gone. And such it will be, till your return redeem it : Not that, the greatest virtue in the World, which is you, can be such a Marshal, as to defeat, or disperse all the vice of this place ; but as higher bodies remove, or contract themselves, when better come, so at your return we shall have one door open to innocence. Yet, Madam, you are not such an Ireland, as produceth neither ill, nor good ; no Spiders or Nightingales, which is a rare degree of perfection : But you have found and practised that experiment, That even nature, out of her detesting of emptiness, if we will make that our work to remove bad, will fill us with good things. To abstain from it, was therefore but the Childhood and Minority of your Soul, which hath been long exercised since, in your manlier active part, of doing good. Of which since I have been a witness and subject, not to tell you some times, that by your influence and example I have attained to such a step of goodness, as to be thankful, were both to accuse your power and judgment of impotency and infirmity.

Your Ladyship's in all Services,

JOHN DONNE.[1]

August 2d, 1607.

[1] The first of these letters, with the sonnet, appears, I think, in all editions of Walton, who has apparently entered the date wrongly. The other three were copied for me from the 1670 original by Miss Elsie Hitchcock. I have slightly modernised a few spellings in them.

JAMES HOWELL (1593-1666)

"The Father" of something is an expression in the history of literature which has become, more justly than some other traditional expressions, rather odious to the modern mind. For in the first place it is an irritatingly conventional phrase, and in the second the paternity is usually questionable. But "the priggish little clerk of the Council," as Thackeray (who nevertheless loved his letters) calls Howell, does really seem to deserve the fathership of all such as in English write unofficial letters "for publication."[1] He wrote a great deal else: and would no doubt in more recent times have been a "polygraphic" journalist of some distinction. And he had plenty to write about. He was an Oxford man; he travelled abroad on commercial errands (though by no means as what has been more recently called a "commercial traveller"); he was one of Ben Jonson's "sons," a Royalist sufferer from the Rebellion, and finally Historiographer Royal as well as Clerk to the Council. His letters, which are sometimes only titularly such[2] but sometimes quite natural, deal with all sorts of subjects—from the murder of Buckingham by Felton to the story of the Oxenham "White Bird" which Kingsley has utilised in *Westward Ho!* And, to do him justice, there is a certain character about the book which is not *merely* the expression of the character of the writer, though no doubt connected with it. Now the

[1] *Epistolae Hoelianae or Familiar Letters* (1657).

[2] Indeed his correspondents are probably sometimes, if not always, imaginary: and many of the letters are only what in modern periodicals are called "middle" articles on this and that subject, headed and tailed with the usual letter-formulas.

possession of this is what makes a book literature. It has been usual to select from Howell's letters of travel, and from historical ones like the Buckingham one above mentioned. I have preferred the "White Bird"; and before it one of several documents, of the same or nearly the same period, which deal with the old English life of country houses—between the mediaeval time and the degradation of the "servant" class, which came in with the eighteenth century or a little earlier. Howell would evidently have echoed Isopel Berners—that admirable girl whom George Borrow slighted—in saying, "Long Melford for ever!" though the house would not with him, as with her, have meant a workhouse. Neither letter seems to require annotation.

11. To Dan Caldwell, Esq., from the Lord Savage's House in Long Melford

My dear Dan,

Tho' considering my former condition of life, I may now be called a countryman, yet you cannot call me a rustic (as you would imply in your letter) as long as I live in so civil and noble a family, as long as I lodge in so virtuous and regular a house as any, I believe, in the land, both for economical government and the choice company; for I never saw yet such a dainty race of children in all my life together. I never saw yet such an orderly and punctual attendance of servants, nor a great house so neatly kept; here one shall see no dog, nor a cat, nor cage to cause any nastiness within the body of the house. The kitchen and gutters and other offices of noise and drudgery are at the tag-end; there's a back-gate for the beggars and the meaner sort of swains to come in at; the stables butt upon the park, which, for a cheerful rising ground, for groves and browsings for the deer, for rivulets of water, may compare with any of its bigness in

the whole land; it is opposite to the front of the great house, whence from the gallery one may see much of the game when they are a-hunting. Now for the gardening and costly choice flowers, for ponds, for stately large walks green and gravelly, for orchards and choice fruits of all sorts, there are few the like in England; here you have your Bon Chrétien pear and Burgamot in perfection; your Muscadel grapes in such plenty that there are some bottles of wine sent every year to the King: and one Mr. Daniel, a worthy gentleman hard by who hath been long abroad, makes good store in his vintage. Truly this house of Long Melford tho' it be not so great, yet is so well compacted and contriv'd with such dainty conveniences every way; that if you saw the landskip of it, you would be mightily taken with it and it would serve for a choice pattern to build and contrive a house by. If you come this summer to your Manor of Sheriff in Essex, you will not be far off hence; if your occasions will permit, it will be worth your coming hither, tho' it be only to see him, who would think it a short journey to go from St. David's Head to Dover Cliffs to see and serve you, were there occasion; if you would know who the same is, 'tis—

Yours,

20. May, 1619. J. H.

12. To Mr. E. D.

SIR,

I thank you a thousand times for the noble entertainment you gave me at Bury; and the pains you took in showing me the antiquities of that place. In requital, I can tell you of a strange thing I saw lately here, and I believe 'tis true. As I passed by St. Dunstan's in Fleet Street the last Saturday, I stepped into a lapidary,

or stone-cutter's shop, to treat with the master for a stone to be put upon my father's tomb; and casting my eyes up and down, I might spy a huge marble with a large inscription upon't, which was thus to my best remembrance:

> *Here lies* John Oxenham, *a goodly young man, in whose chamber, as he was struggling with the pangs of death, a bird with a white breast was seen fluttering about his bed, and so vanished.*
>
> *Here lies also* Mary Oxenham, *the sister of the said* John, *who died the next day, and the said apparition was seen in the room.*

Then another sister is spoke of, then,

> *Here lies hard by* James Oxenham, *the son of the said* John, *who died a child in his cradle a little after; and such a bird was seen fluttering about his head, a little before he expired, which vanished afterwards.*

At the bottom of the stone there is:

> *Here lies* Elizabeth Oxenham *the mother of the said* John, *who died sixteen years since, when such a bird with a white breast was seen about her bed before her death.*

To all these there be divers witnesses, both squires and ladies, whose names are engraven upon the stone. This stone is to be sent to a town hard by Exeter, where this happened. Were you here, I could raise a choice discourse with you hereupon. So, hoping to see you the next term, to requite some of your favours,

I rest—

Your true friend to serve you, J. H.

WESTMINSTER, 3 July. 1632

JOHN EVELYN (1620-1706)

As is naturally the case with writers of "Diaries," "Memoirs," "Autobiographies," and the like, a good deal of matter is deflected into Evelyn's famous *Diary* from possible letters: while his numerous and voluminous published works may also to some extent abstract from or duplicate his correspondence. But there is enough of this [1] to make him a noteworthy epistoler. And it is interesting, though not perhaps surprising, to find that while his Diary is less piquant than his friend Mr. Pepys's, his letters are more so. Not surprising—first, because official letter-writers (Evelyn did a good deal of public work but was never *exactly* an official) often get into a habit of non-committal; and secondly, because there is, in these things as in others, a principle of compensation. Evelyn was almost sure to be a good letter-writer [2] for he had a ready pen, a rather extraordinary range of interests and capacities, plenty of time and means, extensive knowledge of the world, and last but not least, a tendency—not missed by the aforesaid Mr. Pepys—to bestow his information and opinion freely upon less fortunately endowed and equipped mortals. If he never quite reaches in letters the famous passages of the Diary, describing the great Fire, and Whitehall on the eve of Charles the Second's mortal seizure, he sometimes comes near to this, and diffuses throughout a blend of

[1] Some 400 pages from and to him in the most compendious edition.

[2] He thought, writing to Lord Spencer about 1690, that we have "few tolerable letters of our own country" excepting—and that only in a fashion—those of Bacon, Donne and Howell.

humanism, and humanity, of science and art, which is very agreeable. His wife also was no mean letter-writer, but only one of the minor stars of that day round the moon, Dorothy Osborne, to whom we come next. Of Evelyn's own letters several are specially tempting. His curious plan (a particularly favourite craze of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) for a small "college" or lay convent of ladies and gentlemen, a sort of miniature "Abbey of Thelema" is one. His magnificent eulogy of the Duchess of Newcastle (Lamb's "dear Margaret"), which puzzled his editor Bray (from this and other notes a rather stupid man), is another: and his very interesting letter to Pepys on Dreams (Oct. 4, 1689) a third. But on the whole I have preferred the following, which may remind some readers of Mr. Kipling's charming poem on the wonderful things our fathers did and believed, with its invaluable reminder that after all it would be lucky for us if we were no worse than they. The date is not given: but the letter is printed between one of August and one of September, 1668. κολλούριον = *Collyrium* = "eyewash." "*Stillatim*" = "drop by drop." "*Lixivium*" (Fr. "lessive") = "lye," "soapwater." "Catoptrics" and "otacoustics" (though the "ot" = "ear" has gone)—are fairly modern words, "phonocamptics" scarcely so. In fact, I do not remember seeing it elsewhere. It does not appear to be a classical Greek compound, but should mean "the art of guiding and managing the voice." [1] The Tom Whittal story shows that Evelyn, though given to seriousness, could (God rest his soul) be a merry man sometimes. The other proper names, from Mr. Oldenburg to

[1] "*Odorumque canum vis*—as Lucretius expresses it"—perhaps requires a note. Evelyn ought to have known his Lucretius, the first book of which he translated and which he was only prevented from completing by some foolish scruples which Jeremy Taylor wisely but vainly combated. And Lucretius is fond of *vis* as meaning "quality" or "faculty." But Evelyn almost certainly was thinking also, more or less, of Virgil's "odora canum vis," *Aen*. iv. 132.

Thom. Fazzello, could be expounded without difficulty, but with unnecessary expenditure of space.

13. John Evelyn to Doctor Beale

Sir,

I happened to be with Mr Oldenburg some time since, almost upon the article of his receiving the notice you sent him of your fortunate and useful invention; and I remember I did first of all incite him, both to insert it into his next transactions, and to provoke your further prosecution of it; which I exceedingly rejoice to find has been só successful, that you give us hopes of your further thoughts upon that, and those other subjects which you mention. You may haply call to remembrance a passage of the Jesuit Honorati Fabri, who speaking of perspectives, observes, that an object looked on through a small hole appears magnified; from whence he suggests, the casting of two plates neatly perforated, and fitted to look through, preferable to glasses, whose refractions injure the sight. Though I begin to advance in years (being now on the other side of forty), yet the continuance of the perfect use of my senses (for which I bless Almighty God) has rendered me the less solicitous about those artificial aids; which yet I foresee I must shortly apply myself to, and therefore you can receive but slender hints from me which will be worthy your acceptance upon that argument; only, I well remember, that besides Tiberius of old (whom you seem to instance in), Joseph Scaliger affirms the same happened both to his father Julius and himself, in their younger years. And sometimes, methinks, I myself have fancied to have discerned things in a very dark place, when the curtains about my bed have been drawn, as my hands,

fingers, the sheet, and bedclothes ; but since my too intent poring upon a famous eclipse of the sun, about twelve years since, at which time I could as familiarly have stared with open eyes upon the glorious planet in its full lustre, as now upon a glow-worm (comparatively speaking), I have not only lost the acuteness of sight, but much impaired the vigour of it for such purposes as it then served me. But besides that, I have treated mine eyes very ill near these twenty years, during all which time I have rarely put them together, or composed them to sleep, before one at night, and sometimes much later : that I may in some sort redeem my losses by day, in which I am continually importuned with visits from my neighbours and acquaintance, or taken up by other impertinencies of my life in this place. I am plainly ashamed to tell you this, considering how little I have improved myself by it ; but I have rarely been in bed before twelve o'clock as I said, in the space of twenty years ; and yet I read the least print, even in a jolting coach, without other assistance, save that I now and then used to rub my shut eye-lids over with a spirit of wine well rectified, in which I distil a few rosemary flowers much after the process of the Queen of Hungary's water, which does exceedingly fortify, not only my sight, but the rest of my senses, especially my hearing and smelling ; a drop or two being distilled into the nose or ears, when they are never so dull ; and other *κολλούριον* I never apply. Indeed, in the summer time, I have found wonderful benefit in bathing my head with a decoction of some hot and aromatical herbs, in a lixivium made of the ashes of vine branches ; and when my head is well washed with this, I immediately cause abundance of cold fountain water to be poured upon me *stillatim*, for a good half-hour together ; which for the

present is not only one of the most voluptuous and grateful refreshments imaginable, but an incredible benefit to me the whole year after: for I never need other powdering to my hair, to preserve it bright and clean, as the gallants do; but which does certainly greatly prejudice transpiration by filling up, or lying heavy upon the pores. Those, therefore, who (since the use of perukes) accustom to wash their heads, instead of powdering, would doubtless find the benefit of it; both as to the preventing of aches in their head, teeth, and ears, if the vicissitude and inconstancy of the weather, and consequently the use of their monstrous perukes, did not expose them to the danger of catching colds. When I travelled in Italy, and the Southern parts, I did sometimes frequent the public baths (as the manner is), but seldom without peril of my life, till I used this frigid effusion, or rather profusion of cold water before I put on my garments, or durst expose myself to the air; and for this method I was obliged to the old and noble Rantzow, in whose book *De conservandâ valetudine* I had read a passage to this purpose; though I might have remembered how the Dutchmen treated their labouring horses when they are all over in a froth, which they wash off with several buckets of cold water, as I have frequently observed it in the Low Countries.

Concerning other aids; besides what the masters of the catoptrics, phonocamptics, otacoustics, &c., have done, something has been attempted by the Royal Society; and you know the industrious Kircher has much laboured. The rest of those artificial helps are summed up by the Jesuit And. Schottus. I remember that Monsieur Huygens (author of the pendulum), who brought up the learned father of that incomparable youth Monsieur de

Zulichem, who used to prescribe to me the benefit of his little wax taper (a type whereof is, with the history of it, in some of our Registers) for night elucubrations, preferable to all other candle or lamp light whatsoever. And because it explodes all glaring of the flame, which by no means ought to dart upon the eyes, it seems very much to establish your happy invention of tubes instead of spectacles, which have not those necessary defences.

Touching the sight of cats in the night, I am not well satisfied of the exquisiteness of that sense in them. I believe their smelling or hearing does much contribute to their dexterity in catching mice, as to all those animals who are born with those prolix smelling hairs. Fish will gather themselves in shoals to any extraordinary light in the dark night, and many are best caught by that artifice. But whatever may be said of these, and other senses of fish, you know how much the sagacity of birds and beasts excel us; how far eagles and vultures, ravens and other fowls will smell the carcase; *odorumque canum vis*, as Lucretius expresses it, and we daily find by their drawing after the games. Gesner affirms that an otter will wind a fish four miles distance in the water, and my Lord Verulam (cent. 8) speaks of that element's being also a medium of sounds, as well as air. Eels do manifestly stir at the cracking of thunder, but that may also be attributed to some other tremulous motion; yet carps and other fish are known to come at the call and the sound of a bell, as I have been informed. Notorious is the story of Arion, and of Lucullus's lampreys which came *ad nomen*; and you have formerly minded me of Varro's Greek pipe, of which Lucian and Cicero (ad Atticum) take occasion to speak. Pliny's dolphin is famous, and what is related of the American Manati: but the most stupendous instance,

that of the xiphia or sword-fish, which the Mamertines can take up by no other strategem than a song of certain barbarous words, as the thing is related by Thom. Fazzello. It is certain that we hear more accurately when we hold our mouths a little open, than when we keep them shut; and I have heard of a dumb gentleman in England who was taught to speak (and therefore certainly brought to hear in some degree) by applying the head of a base viol against his teeth, and striking upon the strings with the bow. You may remember the late effect of the drum extending the tympanum of a deaf person to great improvement of his hearing, so long as that was beaten upon; and I could at present name a friend of mine, who though he be exceedingly thick of hearing, by applying a straight stick of what length soever, provided it touch the instrument and his ear, does perfectly and with great pleasure hear every tune that is played: all which, with many more, will flow into your excellent work, whilst the argument puts me in mind of one Tom Whittal, a student of Christ Church, who would needs maintain, that if a hole could dexterously be bored through the skull to the brain in the midst of the forehead, a man might both see and hear and smell without the use of any other organs; but you are to know, that this learned problematist was brother to him, who, preaching at St. Mary's, Oxford, took his text out of the history of Balaam, Numb. xxii., "Am I not thine ass?" Dear Sir, pardon this rhapsody of,

Sir, your, &c.

DOROTHY OSBORNE (1627-1695)

THIS very delightful lady—who became the wife of Sir William Temple, famous in political and literary history, and, by so doing or being, mistress of the household in which Swift lived, suffered, but met Stella—was the daughter of Sir Peter Osborne, one of the stoutest of Royalists who, as Governor of Guernsey, held its Castle Cornet for years against the rebels. Whether she was (in 1627) born there—her father had been made *Lieutenant* Governor six years earlier—is not known and has been thought unlikely: but the present writer (who has danced, and played whist within its walls) hopes she was. When we come to know her she was living at Chicksands in Bedfordshire and hoping to marry Temple, though the course of love ran by no means smooth. Attention was first drawn to her letters, and some of them were partly printed, in Courtenay's *Life* of her husband—a book which was reviewed by Macaulay in a famous essay, not overlooking Dorothy. But as a body, they waited till some half century later, when they were published by Judge Parry and received with joy by all fit folk. They were written between 1652 and 1654. The first passage is in her pleasant mood and touches on a subject—aviation—which interested that day and interests this. The second strikes some people as one of the most charming specimens of the love-letter—written neither in the violent delight that has violent end, nor in namby-pamby fashion.[1]

[1] The second passage needs little annotation except that Wrest, in Bedfordshire, where Dorothy met her importunate lover, was the seat of Anthony Grey, Earl of Kent. There is said to be a picture there of Sir William Temple—a copy of Lely's. Wrest

14. To Sir William Temple

SIR,—

You say I abuse you; and Jane says yo me when you say you are not melancholy: is to be believed? Neither, I think; for I could not said so positively (as it seems she did) that I should n be in town till my brother came back: he was not gone when she writ, nor is not yet; and if my brother Peyton had come before his going, I had spoiled her prediction. But now it cannot be; he goes on Monday or Tuesday at farthest. I hope you did truly with me, too, in saying that you are not melancholy (though she does not believe it). I am thought so, many times, when I am not at all guilty on't. How often do I sit in company a whole day, and when they are gone am not able to give an account of six words that was said, and many times could be so much better pleased with the entertainment my own thoughts give me, that 'tis all I can do to be so civil as not to let them see they trouble me. This may be your disease. However, remember you have promised me to be careful of yourself, and that if I secure what you have entrusted me with, you will answer for the rest. Be this our bargain then; and look that you give me as good an account of one as I shall give you of t'other. In earnest I was strangely vexed to see myself forced to disappoint

Park is only a few miles from Chicksands. In the first "Lady Carlisle" is Lucy Percy or Hay, a "*great person*" in many ways—beauty, rank, wit, influence etc.—but hardly a good one. As for "Doralise" Dorothy is quite right. She is one of the brightest features of the huge *Grand Cyrus*. Perhaps it may be just necessary to remind readers that "servant" constantly = "lover"; that "side" refers to the sheet of paper she is using; and that "abuse" = "deceive," not "misuse" or "vituperate."

you so, and felt your trouble and my own too. How often I have wished myself with you, though but for a day, for an hour: I would have given all the time I am to spend here for it with all my heart.

You could not but have laughed if you had seen me last night. My brother and Mr. Gibson were talking by the fire; and I sat by, but as no part of the company. Amongst other things (which I did not at all mind), they fell into a discourse of flying; and both agreed it was very possible to find out a way that people might fly like birds, and despatch their journeys: so I, that had not said a word all night, started up at that, and desired they would say a little more on't, for I had not marked the beginning; but instead of that, they both fell into so violent a laughing, that I should appear so much concerned in such an art; but they little knew of what use it might have been to me. Yet I saw you last night, but 'twas in a dream; and before I could say a word to you, or you to me, the disorder my joy to see you had put me into awakened me. Just now I was interrupted, too, and called away to entertain two dumb gentlemen;—you may imagine whether I was pleased to leave my writing to you for their company;—they have made such a tedious visit, too; and I am so tired with making of signs and tokens for everything I had to say. Good God! how do those that live with them always? They are brothers; and the eldest is a baronet, has a good estate, a wife and three or four children. He was my servant heretofore, and comes to see me still for old love's sake; but if he could have made me mistress of the world I could not have had him; and yet I'll swear he has nothing to be disliked in him but his want of tongue, which in a woman might have been a virtue.

I sent you a part of *Cyrus* last week, where you will meet with one Doralise in the story of Abradate and Panthée. The whole story is very good; but the humour makes the best part of it. I am of her opinion in most things that she says in her character of "L'honnest homme" that she is in search of, and her resolution of receiving no heart that had been offered to anybody else. Pray, tell me how you like her, and what fault you find in my Lady Carlisle's letter? Methinks the hand and the style both show her a great person, and 'tis writ in the way that's now affected by all that pretend to wit and good breeding; only, I am a little scandalized to confess that she uses that word faithful,—she that never knew how to be so in her life.

I have sent you my picture because you wished for it; but, pray, let it not presume to disturb my Lady Sunderland's. Put it in some corner where no eyes may find it out but yours, to whom it is only intended. 'Tis not a very good one, but the best I shall ever have drawn of me; for, as my Lady says, my time for pictures is past, and therefore I have always refused to part with this, because I was sure the next would be a worse. There is a beauty in youth that every one has once in their lives; and I remember my mother used to say there was never anybody (that was not deformed) but were handsome, to some reasonable degree, once between fourteen and twenty. It must hang with the light on the left hand of it; and you may keep it if you please till I bring you the original. But then I must borrow it (for 'tis no more mine, if you like it), because my brother is often bringing people into my closet where it hangs, to show them other pictures that are there; and if he miss this long thence, 'twould trouble his jealous head.

15.

SIR,—

Who would be kind to one that reproaches one so cruelly? Do you think, in earnest, I could be satisfied the world should think me a dissembler, full of avarice or ambition? No, you are mistaken; but I'll tell you what I could suffer, that they should say I married where I had no inclination, because my friends thought it fit, rather than that I had run wilfully to my own ruin in pursuit of a fond passion of my own. To marry for love were no reproachful thing if we did not see that of the thousand couples that do it, hardly one can be brought for an example that it may be done and not repented afterwards. Is there anything thought so indiscreet, or that makes one more contemptible? 'Tis true that I do firmly believe we should be, as you say, *toujours les mesmes*; but if (as you confess) 'tis that which hardly happens once in two ages, we are not to expect the world should discern we were not like the rest. I'll tell you stories another time, you return them so handsomely upon me. Well, the next servant I tell you of shall not be called a whelp, if 'twere not to give you a stick to beat myself with. I would confess that I looked upon the impudence of this fellow as a punishment upon me for my over care in avoiding the talk of the world; yet the case is very different, and no woman shall ever be blamed that an inconsolable person pretends to her when she gives no allowance to it, whereas none shall 'scape that owns a passion, though in return of a person much above her. The little tailor that loved Queen Elizabeth was suffered to talk out, and none of her Council thought it necessary to stop his mouth; but the Queen of Sweden's

kind letter to the King of Scots was intercepted by her own ambassador, because he thought it was not for his mistress's honour (at least that was his pretended reason), and thought justifiable enough. But to come to my Beagle again. I have heard no more of him, though I have seen him since; we meet at Wrest again. I do not doubt but I shall be better able to resist his importunity than his tutor was; but what do you think it is that gives him his encouragement? He was told I had thought of marrying a gentleman that had not above two hundred pound a year, only out of my liking to his person. And upon that score his vanity allows him to think he may pretend as far as another. Thus you see 'tis not altogether without reason that I apprehend the noise of the world, since 'tis so much to my disadvantage.

Is it in earnest that you say your being there keeps me from the town? If so, 'tis very unkind. No, if I had gone, it had been to have waited on my neighbour, who has now altered her resolution and goes not herself. I have no business there, and am so little taken with the place that I could sit here seven years without so much as thinking once of going to it. 'Tis not likely, as you say, that you should much persuade your father to what you do not desire he should do; but it is hard if all the testimonies of my kindness are not enough to satisfy without my publishing to the world that I can forget my friends and all my interest to follow my passion; though, perhaps, it will admit of a good sense, 'tis that which nobody but you or I will give it, and we that are concerned in't can only say 'twas an act of great kindness and something romance, but must confess it had nothing of prudence, discretion, nor sober counsel in't. 'Tis not that I expect, by all your father's offers, to bring my

friends to approve it. I don't deceive myself thus far, but I would not give them occasion to say that I hid myself from them in the doing it; nor of making my action appear more indiscreet than it is. It will concern me that all the world should know what fortune you have, and upon what terms I marry you, that both may not be made to appear ten times worse than they are. 'Tis the general custom of all people to make those that are rich to have more mines of gold than are in the Indies, and such as have small fortunes to be beggars. If an action take a little in the world, it shall be magnified and brought into comparison with what the heroes or senators of Rome performed; but, on the contrary, if it be once condemned, nothing can be found ill enough to compare it with; and people are in pain till they find out some extravagant expression to represent the folly on't. Only there is this difference, that as all are more forcibly inclined to ill than good, they are much apter to exceed in detraction than in praises. Have I not reason then to desire this from you; and may not my friendship have deserved it? I know not; 'tis as you think; but if I be denied it, you will teach me to consider myself. 'Tis well the side ended here. If I had not had occasion to stop there, I might have gone too far, and showed that I had more passions than one. Yet 'tis fit you should know all my faults, lest you should repent your bargain when 'twill not be in your power to release yourself; besides, I may own my ill-humour to you that cause it; 'tis the discontent my crosses in this business have given me makes me thus peevish. Though I say it myself, before I knew you I was thought as well an humoured young person as most in England; nothing displeased, nothing troubled me. When I came out of France, nobody knew

me again. I was so altered, from a cheerful humour that was always alike, never over merry but always pleased, I was grown heavy and sullen, froward and discomposed; and that country which usually gives people a jolliness and gaiety that is natural to the climate, had wrought in me so contrary effects that I was as new a thing to them as my clothes. If you find all this to be sad truth hereafter, remember that I gave you fair warning.

Here is a ring: it must not be at all wider than this, which is rather too big for me than otherwise; but that is a good fault, and counted lucky by superstitious people. I am not so, though: 'tis indifferent whether there be any word in't or not; only 'tis as well without, and will make my wearing it the less observed. You must give Nan leave to cut a lock of your hair for me, too. Oh, my heart! what a sigh was there! I will not tell you how many this journey causes; nor the fear and apprehensions I have for you. No, I long to be rid of you, am afraid you will not go soon enough: do not you believe this? No, my dearest, I know you do not, whatever you say, you cannot doubt that I am yours.

JONATHAN SWIFT (1667-1745)

The Introduction has dealt rather more fully with Swift than with some others: and a further reference to a dominant influence or conflict of influences on his letters will be found below in the head-note on Thackeray. But a little more may be said here. It is rather unfortunate that we have not more *early* letters from him (we have some, if only fragments, from Thackeray, and they are no small "light"). We should like some concerning that curious career at Trinity College, Dublin, which was ended *speciali gratia*, leaving the usual wranglers to their usual wrangle whether the last word meant "grace" or "*dis*-grace." Others, written in various moods from the time when Sir William Temple "spoiled a fine gentleman," and Esther Johnson set running a life-long course of *un*-smooth love, would be more welcome still. They would no doubt be stumbling-blocks to those apt to stumble, just as the existing epistles are: but they would be stepping-stones for the wise. As it is, we have to do without them and perhaps, like most things that are, it is better. For the stumblers are saved the sin of stumbling, and the wise men the nuisance of seeing them do it, and trying to set them right. And there might have been only more painful revelations of the time when, to adjust the words of the famous epitaph "fierce indignation still *could* lacerate the heart," that had felt so fondly and so bitterly what it had to feel.

What follows is characteristic enough[1] and intelligible

[1] As such, it has commended itself to other selectors. But duplication, though it has been sedulously avoided here, is sometimes almost inevitable.

enough to those who will give their intelligence fair play, asking only for information of *facts*. These latter can be supplied at no great length even to those who are unacquainted with Swift's biography. "M.D." is the pet name for Stella, and her rather mysterious companion Mrs. Dingley who lived with her in Dublin and played something like the part of the alloys which are used in experimenting with some metals.[1] "Presto" is Swift himself. "Prior" is the poet. "Sir A. Fountaine" was a Norfolk squire and a great collector of artistic things, most of which were sold not very long ago. "Sterne" (John) was an Irish clergyman and afterwards a bishop, but not of the same family as the novelist. "Cousin *Dryden* Leach" reminds us that Swift was also a cousin of Dryden the poet. "Oroonoko" refers to Afra Behn's introduction of the "noble savage" to English interest. "Patrick" was Swift's very unsatisfactory man servant. "Bernage" a French Huguenot refugee. "George Granville," of the family of the hero of the *Revenge*, was a great Tory, a peer a little later with the title of Lansdowne, and a rather better poet than Johnson thought him. "St. John" and "Harley," if not also "Masham," should not need annotation. Notice the seven, (literally seven!) leagued word at the end. Swift calls their attention to it when beginning his next instalment.

16. To Stella

LONDON, January 16, 1710-11.

O FAITH, young women, I have sent my letter N. 13, without one crumb of an answer to any of MD'S; there's for you now; and yet Presto ben't angry faith, not a bit, only he will begin to be in pain next Irish post, except he sees MD's little hand-

[1] *I.e.* the part of facilitating the operation, and disappearing in the results aimed at.

writing in the glass frame at the bar of St James's Coffee-house, where Presto would never go but for that purpose. Presto's at home, God help him, every night from six till bed time, and has as little enjoyment or pleasure in life at present as any body in the world, although in full favour with all the ministry. As hope saved, nothing gives Presto any sort of dream of happiness, but a letter now and then from his own dearest MD. I love the expectation of it, and when it does not come, I comfort myself, that I have it yet to be happy with. Yes, faith, and when I write to MD, I am happy too; it is just as if methinks you were here, and I prating to you, and telling you where I have been: Well, says you, Presto, come, where have you been to-day? come, let's hear now. And so then I answer; Ford and I were visiting Mr Lewis, and Mr Prior, and Prior has given me a fine Plautus, and then Ford would have had me dine at his lodgings, and so I would not; and so I dined with him at an eating-house; which I have not done five times since I came here; and so I came home, after visiting Sir Andrew Fountaine's mother and sister, and Sir Andrew Fountaine is mending, though slowly.

17. I was making, this morning, some general visits, and at twelve I called at the coffeehouse for a letter from MD; so the man said he had given it to Patrick; then I went to the Court of Requests and Treasury to find Mr Harley, and after some time spent in mutual reproaches, I promised to dine with him; I staid there till seven, then called at Sterne's and Leigh's to talk about your box, and to have it sent by Smyth. Sterne says he has been making inquiries, and will set things right as soon as possible. I suppose it lies at Chester, at least I hope so, and only wants a lift over to you. Here has little Harrison been

to complain, that the printer I recommended to him for his Tatler is a coxcomb; and yet to see how things will happen; for this very printer is my cousin, his name is Dryden Leach; did you never hear of Dryden Leach, he that prints the Postman? He acted Oroonoko, he's in love with Miss Cross.—Well, so I came home to read my letter from Stella, but the dog Patrick was abroad; at last he came, and I got my letter; I found another hand had superscribed it; when I opened it, I found it written all in French, and subscribed Bernage: faith, I was ready to fling it at Patrick's head. Bernage tells me, had been to desire your recommendation to me to make him a captain; and your cautious answer, "That he had as much power with me as you," was a notable one; if you were here, I would present you to the ministry as a person of ability. Bernage should let me know where to write to him; this is the second letter I have had without any direction; however, I beg I may not have a third, but that you will ask him, and send me how I shall direct to him. In the mean time, tell him, that if regiments are to be raised here, as he says, I will speak to George Granville, Secretary at War, to make him a captain; and use what other interest I conveniently can. I think that is enough, and so tell him, and don't trouble me with his letters when I expect them from MD; do you hear, young women, write to Presto.

18. I was this morning with Mr Secretary St John, and we were to dine at Mr Harley's alone, about some business of importance, but there were two or three gentlemen there. Mr Secretary and I went together from his office to Mr Harley's, and thought to have been very wise; but the deuce a bit: the company staid, and more came, and Harley went away at seven, and the Secretary and I staid

with the rest of the company till eleven; I would then have had him come away, but he was in for't; and though he swore he would come away at that flask, there I left him, and I wonder at the civility of these people; when he saw I would drink no more, he would always pass the bottle by me, and yet I could not keep the toad from drinking himself, nor he would not let me go neither, nor Masham, who was with us. When I got home I found a parcel directed to me, and opening it, I found a pamphlet written entirely against myself, not by name, but against something I writ: it is pretty civil, and affects to be so, and I think I will take no notice of it; 'tis against something written very lately; and indeed I know not what to say, nor do I care; and so you are a saucy rogue for losing your money to-day at Stoyte's; to let that bungler beat you, fy Stella, an't you ashamed? well, I forgive you this once, never do so again; no, noooo. Kiss and be friends, sirrah.—Come, let me go sleep; I go earlier to bed than formerly; and have not been out so late these two months; but the secretary was in a drinking humour. So good night, myownlittledearsaucyinsolentrogues.

LADY MARY WORTLEY-MONTAGU (1689-1762)

THE ratio of importance between life and letters varies a good deal with different writers: and the circumstances of the life have seldom been of more importance to the letter than in the case of "Lady Mary"—Pierrepont as she was born. When she was a girl she held an unusual place in the house of her widowed father the Duke of Kingston. Her courtship by, or with, or of (one doubts as to the preposition) Edward Wortley-Montagu, a descendant of Pepys's Lord Sandwich, had peculiarities, and her marriage with him more. She was a sort of pet at George the First's court; she went with her husband to Constantinople as Ambassadress; she introduced inoculation into England; she was, under imperfectly known circumstances, first the idol and then the abomination of Pope; she lived for more than twenty years in France and Italy, having left her husband without, apparently, any quarrel between them; and she only came home in 1761 to die next year. Like her predecessor as Queen of letter-writers, Madame de Sévigné (to whom she was amusingly and rather femininely unjust), she had a favourite daughter (who became Lady Bute[1]); but, unlike her, she had a most objectionable son who was apparently half mad. There was, however, not the slightest madness about Lady Mary—in fact, most of

[1] The likeness, however, ended with the favouritism: for Madame de Grignan, in spite of good looks and good wits, was apparently detested by everybody, except her mother, and deserved it: while nobody has anything to say against Lady Bute.

the objectors (perhaps unjust ones) to her have held that her head was very much better than her heart. Her most popular letters have usually been the Turkish ones, and, at the other end of her life, her Italian descriptions: but selections almost invariably pitch on the curious early one in which she, so to speak, "proposes" to her future husband rather more than, or at least as much as, she accepts his proposal. I prefer, both as less popularised and as more unique still, the following most business-like[1] plan and programme of an elopement. Like Mr. Foker's fight with the post-boy it "didn't come off" as first planned; but Fortune favoured it later.

17. To Mr. Wortley-Montagu

Saturday morning (August, 1712)

I WRIT you a letter last night in some passion. I begin to fear again; I own myself a coward.—You made no reply to one part of my letter concerning my fortune. I am afraid you flatter yourself that my F. [father] may be at length reconciled and brought to reasonable terms. I am convinced, by what I have often heard him say, speaking of other cases like this, he never will. The fortune he has engaged to give with me, was settled on my B. [brother's] marriage, on my sister and on myself; but in such a manner, that it was left in his power to give it all to either of us, or divide it as he

[1] It is, of course, not *merely* business-like—the mixture of something else makes it rather fascinating. They were curiously fond of elopements in the eighteenth century, Sheridan's satire in *The Rivals* having ample justification. Nor was this merely due to the more severe exercise of paternal authority. For they often preferred (as the philosophical parent of the celebrated Mrs. Greville remarked when his daughter ran away with Mr. G.) to "get out of the window when there was not the slightest objection to their passing through the door."

thought fit. He has given it all to me. Nothing remains for my sister, but the free bounty of my F. [father] from what he can save; which, notwithstanding the greatness of his estate, may be very little. Possibly after I have disobliged him so much, he may be glad to have her so easily provided for, with money already raised; especially if he has a design to marry himself, as I hear. I do not speak this that you should not endeavour to come to terms with him, if you please; but I am fully persuaded it will be to no purpose. He will have a very good answer to make:—that I suffered this match to proceed; that I made him make a very silly figure in it; that I have let him spend £400 in wedding-cloaths; all which I saw without saying any thing. When I first pretended to oppose this match, he told me he was sure I had some other design in my head; I denied it with truth. But you see how little appearance there is of that truth. He proceeded with telling me that he never would enter into treaty with another man, &c., and that I should be sent immediately into the North to stay there; and, when he died, he would only leave me an annuity of £400. I had not courage to stand this view, and I submitted to what he pleased. He will now object against me,—why, since I intended to marry in this manner, I did not persist in my first resolution; that it would have been as easy for me to run away from T. [Thoresby] as from hence; and to what purpose did I put him, and the gentleman I was to marry, to expences, &c.? He will have a thousand plausible reasons for being irreconcileable, and 'tis very probable the world will be of his side. Reflect now for the last time in what manner you must take me. I shall come to you with only a night-gown and petticoat, and that is all you will get with me. I told a lady of my

friends what I intend to do. You will think her a very good friend when I tell you she has proffered to lend us her house if we would come there the first night. I did not accept of this till I had let you know it. If you think it more convenient to carry me to your lodgings, make no scruple of it. Let it be where it will: if I am your wife I shall think no place unfit for me where you are. I beg we may leave London next morning, wherever you intend to go. I should wish to go out of England if it suits with your affairs. You are the best judge of your father's temper. If you think it would be obliging to him, or necessary for you, I will go with you immediately to ask his pardon and his blessing. If that is not proper at first, I think the best scheme is going to the Spa. When you come back, you may endeavour to make your father admit of seeing me, and treat with mine (though I persist in thinking it will be to no purpose). But I cannot think of living in the midst of my relations and acquaintance after so unjustifiable a step:—unjustifiable to the world,—but I think I can justify myself to myself. I again beg you to hire a coach to be at the door early Monday morning, to carry us some part of our way, wherever you resolve our journey shall be. If you determine to go to that lady's house, you had better come with a coach and six at seven o'clock tomorrow. She and I will be in the balcony that looks on the road: you have nothing to do but to stop under it, and we will come down to you. Do in this what you like best. After all, think very seriously. Your letter, which will be waited for, is to determine everything. I forgive you a coarse expression in your last, which, however, I wish had not been there. You might have said something like it without expressing it in that manner; but there was so much complaisance in

the rest of the foremost men of his time in politics or letters
no goodnesnd that he was not far below such rank in either.
again, and ing letter is one of the most characteristic of
least doubthich it has been the fashion to sneer. All one
your fortun it is, "What a blessing it would be if a good
to make a soi e in the twentieth century, and in places varying
you have pro ets to the House of Commons, would obey at
its precepts!"

'Tis someth
expect anythi
not pretend
I had rather

HESTERFIELD TO HIS SON

ticns I have

LONDON. Sept. 22, O.S., 1749

love me. If you can
it, be sincere and tell me in philters and love potions,
yours at all, than, for a short hau had given Sir Charles
in ages of misery. I hope there which he speaks of you,
for this precaution; but, however, as I will not repeat
it. I depend entirely on your honour, and I cannot
suspect you of any way doing wrong. Do not imagine
I shall be angry at any thing you can tell me. Let it be
sincere; do not impose on a woman that leaves all things
for you.

friends what I intend to do. You will think her a very good friend when I tell you she has proffered to lend us her house if we would come there the first night. I did not accept of this till I had let you know it. If you think it more convenient to carry me to your lodgings, make no scruple of it. Let it be where it will: if I am your wife I shall think no place unfit for me where you are. I beg we may leave London next morning, wherever you intend to go. I should wish to go out of England if it suits with your affairs. You are the best judge of your father's temper. If you think it would be obliging to him, or necessary for you, I will go with you immediately to ask his pardon and his blessing. If or father *mis*known, at first, I think the best scheme is go patronage and condem- you come back, you may r-urals, by Dickens's caricature, admit of seeing me, and untrue but merely fragmentary in thinking it will be to gambler. Therefore, though these of livi[illegible] not as a rule biographical, this may be one of the exceptions; for his life was anything but that of a mere idler and *grand Seigneur*. He entered the House of Commons before he was of age, and had much to do with political and literary as well as Court society before, in 1725, he succeeded to the peerage. A year or two afterwards he went as ambassador to the Hague, a post which he held, doing some important business, for four years. On coming home he became a formidable opponent of Walpole, and at one time led the opposition in the Upper House. He was a most successful Viceroy in Ireland at the difficult period of the "'45," and a judicious "Secretary for the North" after it. He conducted the reform of the Calendar through Parliament, and only gave up active participation in home politics because of his increasing deafness. In foreign affairs he was an adroit and successful diplomatist, and made an early and remarkably clear-sighted anticipation of the French Revolution. It is not extravagant to say that, if he had had his fortune and position to make, he might have

been one of the foremost men of his time in politics or letters or both; and that he was not far below such rank in either. The following letter is one of the most characteristic of those at which it has been the fashion to sneer. All one can say of it is, "What a blessing it would be if a good many people in the twentieth century, and in places varying from the streets to the House of Commons, would obey at least some of its precepts!"

18. Lord Chesterfield to his Son

London. Sept. 22, O.S., 1749

Dear Boy,

If I had faith in philters and love potions, I should suspect that you had given Sir Charles Williams some, by the manner in which he speaks of you, not only to me, but to everybody else. I will not repeat to you what he says of the extent and correctness of your knowledge, as it might either make you vain, or persuade you that you had already enough of what nobody can have too much. You will easily imagine how many questions I asked and how narrowly I sifted him upon your subject: he answered me, and I daresay with truth, just as I could have wished; till, satisfied entirely with his accounts of your character and learning, I inquired into other matters, intrinsically indeed of less consequence, but still of great consequence to every man, and of more to you than to almost any man; I mean, your address, manners and air. To these questions, the same truth which he had observed before, obliged him to give me much less satisfactory answers. And, as he thought himself in friendship both to you and me, obliged to tell me the disagreeable as well as the agreeable truths, upon

the same principle I think myself obliged to repeat them to you.

He told me, then, that in company you were frequently most *provokingly* inattentive, absent, and *distrait.* That you came into a room, and presented yourself very awkwardly; that at table you constantly threw down knives, forks, napkins, bread, etc., and that you neglected your person and dress, to a degree unpardonable at any age, and much more so at yours.

These things, however immaterial soever they may seem to people who do not know the world and the nature of mankind, give me, who know them to be exceedingly material, very great concern. I have long distrusted you, and therefore frequently admonished you upon these articles; and I tell you plainly, that I shall not be easy till I hear a very different account of them. I know of no one thing more offensive to a company, than that inattention and *distraction.* It is showing them the utmost contempt; and people never forgive contempt. No man is *distrait* with the man he fears, or the woman he loves; which is a proof that every man can get the better of that *distraction* when he thinks it worth his while to do so; and, take my word for it, it is always worth his while. For my own part, I would rather be in company with a dead man than with an absent one; for if the dead man gives me no pleasure, at least he shows me no contempt; whereas the absent man, silently indeed, but very plainly, tells me that he does not think me worth his attention. Besides, can an absent man make any observations upon the characters, customs, and manners of the company? No. He may be in the best companies of his lifetime (if they will admit him, which, if I were they, I would not), and never be one jot the

wiser. I never will converse with an absent man; one may as well talk with a deaf one. It is, in truth, a practical blunder, to address ourselves to a man, who we see plainly neither hears, minds, nor understands us. Moreover, I aver that no man is, in any degree, fit for either business or conversation, who cannot, and does not, direct and command his attention to the present object, be that what it will.

You know, by experience, that I grudge no expense in your education, but I will positively not keep you a flapper. You may read, in Dr. Swift, the description of these flappers, and the use they were of to your friends the Laputans; whose minds (Gulliver says) are so taken up with intense speculations, that they neither can speak, nor attend to the discourses of others, without being roused by some external taction upon the organs of speech and hearing; for which reason, those people who are able to afford it, always keep a flapper in their family, as one of their domestics, nor ever walk about, or make visits, without him. This flapper is likewise employed diligently to attend his master in his walks, and, upon occasion, to give a soft flap upon his eyes; because he is always so wrapt up in cogitation, that he is in manifest danger of falling down every precipice, and bouncing his head against every post, and, in the streets, of jostling others, or being jostled into the kennel himself. If *Christian* will undertake this province into the bargain, with all my heart; but I will not allow him any increase of wages upon that score.

In short, I give you fair warning, that when we meet, if you are absent in mind, I will soon be absent in body; for it will be impossible for me to stay in the room; and if at table you throw down your knife, plate, bread, etc.,

and hack the wing of a chicken for half an hour, without being able to cut it off, and your sleeve all the time in another dish, I must rise from table to escape the fever you would certainly give me. Good God! How I should be shocked if you came into my room, for the first time, with two left legs, presenting yourself with all the graces and dignity of a tailor, and your clothes hanging upon you like those in Monmouth Street, upon tenter-hooks! Whereas I expect, nay require, to see you present yourself with the easy and gentle air of a man of fashion who has kept good company. I expect you not only well dressed, but very well dressed; I expect a gracefulness in all your motions, and something particularly engaging in your address. All this I expect, and all these it is in your power, by care and attention, to make me find; but, to tell you the plain truth, if I do not find it, we shall not converse very much together; for I cannot stand inattention and awkwardness; it would endanger my health.

You have often seen, and I have as often made you observe, L[yttelton]'s distinguished inattention and awkwardness. Wrapped up like a Laputan in intense thought, and possibly sometimes in no thought at all—which, I believe, is very often the case with absent people—he does not know his most intimate acquaintance at sight, or answers them as if they were at cross purposes. He leaves his hat in one room, his sword in another, and would leave his shoes in a third, if his buckles, although awry, did not save them; his legs and arms, by his awkward management of them, seem to have undergone the *question extraordinaire*; and his head, always hanging upon one or other of his shoulders, seems to have received the first stroke upon a block. I sincerely value and esteem him for his parts, learning, and virtue; but, for

the soul of me, I cannot love him in company. This will be universally the case, in common life, of every inattentive awkward man, let his real merit and knowledge be ever so great.

When I was of your age, I desired to shine, as far as I was able, in every part of life; and was as attentive, to my manners, my dress, and my air, in company on evenings, as to my books, and my tutor in the mornings. A young fellow should be ambitious to shine in everything; and, of the two, rather overdo than underdo. These things are by no means trifles; they are of infinite consequence to those who are to be thrown into the great world, and who would make a figure or a fortune in it. It is not sufficient to deserve well, one must please well too. Awkward, disagreeable merit, will never carry anybody far. Wherever you find a good dancing master, pray let him put you upon your h unches; not so much for the sake of dancing, as e odds ing into a room and presenting yourself gente to be pr gracefully. Women, whom you ought to en through th lease, cannot forgive a vulgar and awk issing his slipper ires; *il leur faut du brillant.* The ge yself of anything I retty like them, and are equally tak omply with an establi graces.

I am very olic countries, I never ived the diamond buckles safe s at the elevation, nor for them, is, that they may be oy. It is a complaisance et, and that your stockings m and by no means, as som be sorry you were an egregiou an implied approbation the two, I would rather hav itudes and situations are t think negligence in my own n themselves, that I would qu rtainly I expect no advant m. It may indeed be improp indecent with regard to at tribute of complaisance, upo clothes; but I will hav ade like other

people's. In the evenings I recommend to you the company of women of fashion, who have a right to attention, and will be paid it. Their company will smooth your manners, and give you a habit of attention and respect; of which you will find the advantage among men.

My plan for you, from the beginning, has been to make you shine, equally in the learned and in the polite world; The former part is almost completed to my wishes, and will, I am persuaded, in a little time more, be quite so. The latter part is still in your power to complete; and I flatter myself that you will do it, or else the former part will avail you very little; especially in your deportment, where the exterior address and graces do half the business; they must be harbingers of your merit, or your merit will be very coldly received: all can, and do judge of the former, few of the latter.

Mr. Harte tells mh that you have grown very much since your illness: ifness; get up to five feet ten, or even nine inches, your figun, and probably, be a good one; and if well dressed and g distinguished probably please; which is a much greater advaup like a Laputan an people commonly think. Lord Bacories in no thought at recommendation.

I would wish yothe case with absent p l'homme universel. You are near intimate acquaintance ever anybody was at your age; f they were at cross pu the course of this next year orone room, his sword in attion to your studies in the mooes in a third, if his bucklemanners, air, and tournure in ve them; his legs and arn man I wish you, and the ment of them, seem to have

Our letters g ordinaire; and his head, alway often miscarry totally, t r of his shoulders, seems to havit the same things. So, t upon a block. I sincerely vt post Mr Harte's letter his parts, learning, and virtue; knowledge

it again by this to you. If this should find you still at Verona, let it inform you, that I wish you to set out soon for Naples; unless Mr. Harte should think it better for you to stay at Verona, or any other place on this side Rome, till you go there for the Jubilee. Nay, if he likes it better, I am very willing that you should go directly from Verona to Rome; for you cannot have too much of Rome, whether upon account of the language, the curiosities, or the company. My only reason for mentioning Naples, is for the sake of the climate, upon account of your health; but, if Mr. Harte thinks your health is now so well restored, as to be above climate, he may steer your course wherever he thinks proper; and, for aught I know, your going directly to Rome, and consequently staying there so much the longer, may be as well as anything else. I think you and I cannot put our affairs into better hands than in Mr. Harte's; and I will take his infallibility against the Pope's, with some odds on his side. *A propos* of the Pope; remember to be presented to him before you leave Rome, and go through the necessary ceremonies for it, whether of kissing his slipper or . . . ; for I would never deprive myself of anything I wanted to do or see, by refusing to comply with an established custom. When I was in Catholic countries, I never declined kneeling in their churches at the elevation, nor elsewhere, when the Host went by. It is a complaisance due to the custom of the place, and by no means, as some silly people have imagined, an implied approbation of their doctrine. Bodily attitudes and situations are things so very indifferent in themselves, that I would quarrel with nobody about them. It may indeed be improper for Mr. Harte to pay that tribute of complaisance, upon account of his character.

This letter is a very long, and possibly a very tedious one; but my interest for your perfection is so great, and particularly at this critical and decisive period of your life, that I am only afraid of omitting, but never of repeating, or dwelling too long upon anything that I think may be of the least use to you. Have the same anxiety for yourself that I have for you, and all will do well. Adieu, my dear child!

GEORGE BALLARD (1706-1755)

THE extreme wickedness of reviewers has been a conviction with many authors—who have sometimes, it would seem, succumbed to it themselves and retaliated in reviewing others. The following letter to Dr. Lyttelton, Dean of Exeter, is a very early (1753) and not unamusing example of this conviction: and is given as such, though the writer has no wide fame. His history is, however, interesting and shows, among other things, how entirely erroneous is the idea that till recently (and even now to some extent) opportunities of showing themselves able to profit by education were and are denied to the "lower classes" in England. Ballard was apprenticed to a staymaker ("habit-maker" as others say) at Chipping-Campden, but betook himself in his leisure hours to the study of Anglo-Saxon. Hearing of which fact the gentlemen of the local hunt (the boozy squire-tyrants of popular tradition) subscribed for an annuity of £100 a year to him, but he would only accept £60. With this he went up to Oxford to enjoy the Bodleian, was made a "clerk" at Magdalen and later an esquire-bedell to the University. He did much good work of the antiquarian kind, and died a year or two after writing this letter, having (one hopes) relieved himself by his protest and been consoled by a kind answer from Lyttelton.[1]

[1] Ballard's *Memoirs of Learned Ladies of Great Britain who have been celebrated for their writings or skill in the Learned Languages Arts & Sciences*, appeared at Oxford in 4to (1752) and 8vo (1775). It contains some sixty lives, the most note-

19. To Dr. Lyttelton, Dean of Exeter

A Defence of the History of Learned Ladies

REVD. AND HOND. SIR,

My best acknowledgments are due for the favour of two epistles; the first of which I received a few minutes after my last set forward for Exeter. I would have answered it immediately, but that I thought a little respite might be agreeable, before I gave you the trouble of another long letter.

The day before I received your first epistle, a Gent. of my acquaintance brought me the *Monthly Review* for February, that I might see what the candid and genteel authors of that work had said of mine. They observe to the publick, that *I have said* C. Tishem was so skilled in the Greek Tongue, that she could read Galen in its original, which very few Physicians are able to do. Whether this was done maliciously, in order to bring the wrath of the Æsculapians upon me, or inadvertently, I cannot say: but I may justly affirm, that they have used me very ill in that affair; since if they had read with attention, which they ought to have done before they attempted to give a character of the Book, they must have known that the whole account of that lady (which is but one page) is not mine, but borrowed with due acknowledgment from the *General Dictionary*. They are likewise pleased to

worthy names being those of Queens Elizabeth and Mary of Scotland, Lady Jane Grey, Margaret Countess of Richmond (*the* "Lady Margaret"), the Duchess of Newcastle, Lady Winchelsea, the two Countesses of Pembroke ("Sidney's sister" and Anne Clifford), Dame Juliana Barnes or Berners, Dryden's Anne Killigrew, Dorothy Pakington (the alleged author of *The Whole Duty of Man*), and "the matchless Orinda."

inform the world that I have been rather too industrious in the undertaking, having introduced several women who hardly deserved a place in the work. I did not do this for want of materials; neither did I do it rashly, without advising with others of superior judgment in those affairs, of which number Mr. Professor Ward was one. But those pragmatical Censors seem to have but little acquaintance with those studies, or otherwise they might have observed that all our general Biographers, as Leland, Bale, Pits, Wood, and Tanner, have trod the very same steps; and have given an account of all the authors they could meet with, good and bad, just as they found them: and yet, I have never heard of anyone that had courage or ill-nature enough, to endeavour to expose them for it. While I was ruminating on these affairs, three or four letters came to my hands, and perceiving one of them come from my worthy friend the Dean of Exeter, I eagerly broke it open, and was perfectly astonished to find myself charged with *party zeal* in my book; and that from thence the most candid reader might conclude the author to be both a Church and State Tory. But after having thoroughly considered all the passages objected to, and not finding the least tincture of either Whig or Tory principles contained in them, I began to cheer up my drooping spirits, in hopes that I might possibly out-live my supposed crime; but, alas! to my still greater confusion! when I opened my next letter from a Tory acquaintance, I was like one thunderstruck at the contents of it. He discharges his passionate but ill-grounded resentment upon me most furiously. He tells me, he did not imagine Magdalen College could have produced such a rank Whig. He reproaches me with want of due esteem for the Stuart Family, to whom he says I have shewn a deadly hatred,

and he gives me, as he imagines, three flagrant instances of it. 1. That I have unseasonably and maliciously printed a letter of Queen Elizabeth's, in order to blacken the memory of Mary Queen of Scots, and that too, at a time when her character began to shine as bright as the Sun. 2dly. That I have endeavoured to make her memory odious, by representing her as wanting natural affection to her only son, in my note at p. 162, where he says I have printed part of a Will, &c. And 3dly, tho' she was cut off in such a barbarous and unprecedented manner, yet she has fallen unlamented by me. I am likewise charged with having an affection to Puritanism; the reasons for which are, my giving the Life of a Puritan Bishop's Lady, which it seems need not have been done by me, had I not had a particular regard for her, since it had been done before by Goodwin who reprinted her Devotions. And not content with this, I have blemished my book with the memoirs of a Dissenting teacher's wife, and have been kind enough to heighten even the character given her by her indulgent husband: and that I am very fond of quoting Fox and Burnet upon all occasions. These are thought strong indications of the above-mentioned charge. It may be thought entirely unnecessary to answer any of the objections from Exeter, after having given you this Summary of my kind Friend's Candid Epistle; but to you, Sir, to whom I could disclose the very secrets of my soul, I will endeavour to say a word or two upon this subject, and make you my Confessor upon this occasion; and I will do it with as much sincerity, as if I lay on my death-bed. Before I was fourteen years old, I read over Fox's Acts and Monuments of the Church, and several of the best books of Polemical Divinity, which strongly fortified me in the Protestant Religion; and gave me the

greatest abhorrence to Popery. And soon after I perused Mercurius Rusticus, The Eleventh Persecution, Lloyd, Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy, and many others, which gave me almost as bad an opinion of the Dissenters. But then I learned in my childhood *to live in Charity with all Men*, and I have used my best endeavours to put this doctrine in practice all my life long. I never thought ill, or quarrelled with any man merely because he had been educated in principles different to mine; and yet I have been acquainted with many papists, dissenters, &c. and if I found any of them learned, ingenuous, and modest, I always found my heart well-disposed for contracting a firm friendship with them: and notwithstanding that, I dare believe that all those people will, with joint consent, vouch for me, that I have ever been steady in my own principles.

I can truly affirm that never any one engaged in such a work, with an honester heart, or executed it with more unbiassed integrity, than I have done. And indeed, I take the unkind censures passed upon me by the furious uncharitable zealots of both parties, to be the strongest proof of it. And after all, I dare challenge any man, whether. Protestant, Papist, or Dissenter, Whig or Tory, (and I have drawn up and published memoirs of women who professed all those principles) to prove me guilty of partiality, or to shew that I have made any uncharitable reflections on any person, and whenever that is done, I will faithfully promise to make a public recantation. I wish, Sir, you would point out to me any one unbecoming word or expression which has fell from me on Bishop Burnet. Had I had the least inclination to have lessened his character, I did not want proper materials to have done it. I have in my possession two original letters

from Bishop Gibson and Mr Norris of Bemerton, to Dr Charlett, which, if published, would lessen your too great esteem for him. And what, I beseech you, Sir, have I said in praise of Mrs Hopton and her pious and useful labours, which they do not well deserve, and which can possibly give any just offence to any good man? I dare not censure or condemn a good thing merely because it borders upon the Church of Rome. I rather rejoice that she retains any thing I can fairly approve. Should I attempt to do this, might I not condemn the greater part of our Liturgy, &c.? and should I not stand self-condemned for so doing? I cannot for my life perceive that I have said any thing of that excellent woman, which she does not merit; and I must beg leave to say that I think her letter to F. Turbeville deserves to be wrote in letters of gold, and ought to be carefully read and preserved by all Protestants. Mary Queen of Scots fell under my notice, no otherwise than as a learned woman. The affairs you mention would by no means suit my peaceable temper. I was too well acquainted with the warm disputes, and fierce engagement both of domestic and foreign writers on that head, once to touch upon the subject. And indeed, unless I had been the happy discoverer of some secret springs of action which would have given new information to the public, it would have been excessive folly in me to intermeddle in an affair of so tender a nature, and of so great importance.

I have often blamed my dear friend Mr. Brome for destroying his valuable collections, but I now cease to wonder at it. He spent his leisure hours pleasantly and inoffensively, and when old age came on, whicn not only abates thirst, but oftentimes gives a disrelish to these and almost all other things, which do not help to make our

passage into eternity more easy, he then destroyed them (I dare believe) in order to prevent the malicious reflections of an ill-natured world.

I have always been a passionate lover of History and Antiquity, Biography, and Northern Literature: and as I have ever hated idleness, so I have in my time filled many hundred sheets with my useless scribble, the greater part of which I will commit to the flames shortly, to prevent their giving me any uneasiness in my last moments.[1]

[May 22, 1753.]

[1] Perhaps a note should be added on "Mrs. Hopton" and "F. Turbe(r)ville." The former, born Susanna Harvey (1627-1709), was the wife of a Welsh judge, and wrote devotional works. The latter, Henry T. (d. 1678: the "F" of text is of course "Father"), was a writer of doctrinal and controversial manuals on the Roman side.

THOMAS GRAY (1716-1771)

THE chief thing to add to what has been said of Gray in the Introduction is something that may draw attention to a curious feature of his letters, not there distinctly noticed. Letters, it must be sufficiently seen even from this little book, have a curious *variety* of relation to the characters, personal and literary, of their writers. Sometimes they show us phases entirely or almost entirely concealed in the published works; sometimes again, without definitely revealing new aspects, they complete and enforce the old; while, in yet a third, though perhaps the smallest, class of instances, they are as it were results of the same governing formula as that of the published works themselves, the difference lying almost wholly in the subjects and in the methods and circumstances of treatment. Gray belongs to this last division. There is not, of course, in his letters the same severity of discipline and restriction of utterance, that we find in his poems. But that, in letters, was impossible —at least in letters that should supply tolerable reading. Yet the same general principle, which was somewhat exaggerated in the phrase about his " never speaking out," appears in them. There is always a certain restraint (at least in all that have been published) and it would probably have extended in proportion to others, however little their subject might seem compatible with it. In what we have it gives a curious *seasoning*—something which preserves as well as flavours like salt or vinegar. Of those which follow the first is an early one. Mason's apologetic note is to the effect that it " may appear whimsical " but it gives him an opportunity of remarking that Mr. Gray was " extremely

skilled in the customs of the ancient Romans," both utterances being characteristic, to some extent of the time but to a greater of the writer. The second letter, to Gray's most intimate friend Dr. Wharton, and more than a quarter of a century later, is a good example of the *variety* of these epistles—scenery, literature, politics, science, gossip and what not, being all dealt with.

20. To Richard West [extract]

Rome, May, 1740.

I AM to-day just returned from Alba, a good deal fatigued; for you know the Appian is somewhat tiresome. We dined at Pompey's; he indeed was gone for a few days to his Tusculan, but, by the care of his Villicus, we made an admirable meal. We had the dugs of a pregnant sow, a peacock, a dish of thrushes, a noble scarus just fresh from the Tyrrhene, and some conchylia of the Lake with garum sauce: For my part I never eat better at Lucullus's table. We drank half-a-dozen cyathi a-piece of ancient Alban to Pholoë's health; and after bathing, and playing an hour at ball, we mounted our essedum again, and proceeded up the mount to the temple. The priests there entertained us with an account of a wonderful shower of bird's eggs that had fallen two days before, which had no sooner touched the ground, but they were converted into gudgeons; as also that, the night past, a dreadful voice had been heard out of the Adytum, which spoke Greek during a full half-hour, but nobody understood it. But quitting my Romanities, to your great joy and mine, let me tell you in plain English, that we come from Albano. The present town lies within the inclosure of Pompey's Villa in ruins. The Appian way runs through it, by the side of which, a little farther, is a

large old tomb, with five pyramids upon it, which the learned suppose to be the burying-place of the family, because they do not know whose it can be else. But the vulgar assure you it is the sepulchre of the Curiatii, and by that name (such is their power) it goes. One drives to Castle Gandolfo, a house of the Pope's, situated on the top of one of the Collinette, that forms a brim to the basin, commonly called the Alban lake. It is seven miles round; and directly opposite to you, on the other side, rises the Mons Albanus, much taller than the rest, along whose side are still discoverable (not to common eyes) certain little ruins of the old Alba Longa. They had need be very little, as having been nothing but ruins ever since the days of Tullus Hostilius. On its top is a house of the Constable Colonna's, where stood the temple of Jupiter Latialis. At the foot of the hill Gandolfo, are the famous outlets of the lake, built with hewn stone, a mile and a half under ground. Livy you know, amply informs us of the foolish occasion of this expence, and gives me this opportunity of displaying all my erudition, that I may appear considerable in your eyes. This is the prospect from one window of the palace. From another you have the whole Campagna, the City, Antium, and the Tyrrhene sea (twelve miles distant) so distinguishable, that you may see the vessels sailing upon it. All this is charming. Mr. Walpole says, our memory sees more than our eyes in this country. Which is extremely true; since, for realities, Windsor or Richmond Hill is infinitely preferable to Albano or Frescati. I am now at home, and going to the window to tell you it is the most beautiful of Italian nights, which, in truth, are but just begun (so backward has the spring been here, and every where else, they say) There is a moon! there are stars for you!

Do not you hear the fountain? Do not you smell the orange flowers? That building yonder is the convent of S. Isidore; and that eminence, with the cypress trees and pines upon it, the top of M. Quirinal. This is all true, and yet my prospect is not two hundred yards in length.

21. To Wharton

DEAR DOCTOR

Whatever my pen may do, I am sure my thoughts expatiate nowhere oftener or with more pleasure, than to Old-Park. I hope you have made my peace with Miss Deborah. it is certain, whether her name were in my letter or not, she was as present to my memory, as the rest of the little family, & I desire you would present her with two kisses in my name, & one a-piece to all the others: for I shall take the liberty to kiss them all (great & small) as you are to be my proxy.

In spite of the rain, w^{ch} I think continued with very short intervals till the beginning of this month, & quite effaced the summer from the year, I made a shift to pass May & June not disagreeably in Kent. I was surprised at the beauty of the road to Canterbury, which (I know not why) had not struck me in the same manner before. The whole country is a rich and well-cultivated garden, orchards, cherry-grounds, hop-gardens, intermix'd with corn & frequent villages, gentle risings cover'd with wood, and everywhere the Thames and Medway breaking in upon the Landscape with all their navigation. It was indeed owing to the bad weather, that the whole scene was dress'd in that tender emerald-green, w^{ch} one usually sees only for a fortnight in the opening of spring, & this continued till I left the country. My residence was eight miles east of

Canterbury in a little quiet valley on the skirts of Barham-down. In these parts the whole soil is chalk, and whenever it holds up, in half an hour it is dry enough to walk out. I took the opportunity of three or four days fine weather to go into the Isle of Thanet, saw Margate (w^{ch} is Bartholomew-Fair by the sea side), Ramsgate, & other places there, and so came by Sandwich, Deal, Dover, Folkstone, & Hithe, back again. The coast is not like Hartlepool: there are no rocks, but only chalky cliffs of no great height, till you come to Dover. There indeed they are noble & picturesque, and the opposite coasts of France begin to bound your view, w^{ch} was left before to range unlimited by anything but the horizon: yet it is by no means a *shipless* sea, but everywhere peopled with white sails & vessels of all sizes in motion. And take notice (except in the Isle, w^{ch} is all corn-fields, and has very little inclosure) there are in all places hedgerows & tall trees even within a few yards of the beach. Particularly Hithe stands on an eminence cover'd with wood. I shall confess we had fires of a night (ay, & a day too) several times even in June: but don't go & take advantage of this, for it was the most untoward year that ever I remember.

Your Friend Rousseau (I doubt) grows tired of M^{r} Davenport and Derbyshire. He has picked a quarrel with David Hume & writes him letters of 14 pages Folio upbraiding him of all his *noirceurs.* Take one only as a specimen, he says, that at Calais they chanced to sleep in the same room together, & that he overheard David talking in his sleep, and saying, *Ah! Je le tiens, ce Jean-Jacques là.* In short (I fear) for want of persecution & admiration (for these are real complaints) he will go back to the Continent.

What shall I say to you about the Ministry? I am as angry as a Common-council Man of London about my L[d] Chatham: but a little more patient, & will hold my tongue till the end of the year. In the mean time I do mutter in secret & to you, that to quit the house of Commons, his natural strength; to sap his own popularity & grandeur (which no one but himself could have done) by assuming a foolish title; & to hope that he could win by it and attach to him a Court, that hate him, & will dismiss him, as soon as ever they dare, was the weakest thing, that ever was done by so great a Man. Had it not been for this, I should have rejoiced at the breach between him & L[d] Temple, & at the union between him & the D: of Grafton & M[r] Conway: but patience! we shall see! St:[1] perhaps is in the country (for he hoped for a month's leave of absence) and if you see him, you will learn more than I can tell you.

Mason is at Aston. He is no longer so anxious about his wife's health, as he was, tho' I find she still has a cough, & moreover I find she is not with child: but he made such a bragging, how could one choose but believe him.

When I was in town, I mark'd in my pocket-book the utmost limits & divisions of the two columns in your Thermometer, and asked Mr. Ayscough the Instrument-Maker on Ludgate Hill, what scales they were. He immediately assured me, that one was Fahrenheit's, & shew'd me one exactly so divided. The other he took for Reaumur's, but, as he said there were different scales of his contrivance, he could not exactly tell, w[ch] of them it was.

[1] "St." is Richard Stonhewer, a Fellow of Peterhouse, secretary to the Duke of Grafton, and a man of considerable, though not public, importance in politics.

Your Brother told me, you wanted to know, who wrote Duke Wharton's life in the Biography: I think, it is chiefly borrowed from a silly book enough call'd *Memoirs of that Duke*: but who put it together there, no one can inform me. The only person certainly known to write in that vile collection (I mean these latter volumes) is D^r Nicholls, who was expell'd here for stealing books.

Have you read the *New Bath-Guide?*[1] it is the only thing in fashion, & is a new & original kind of humour. Miss Prue's Conversion I doubt you will paste down, as S^r W: S^t Quintyn did, before he carried it to his daughter. Yet I remember you all read *Crazy Tales*[2] without pasting. Buffon's first collection of Monkeys are come out (it makes the 14^th volume) something, but not much, to my edification: for he is pretty well acquainted with their persons, but not with their manners.

I shall be glad to hear, how far M^rs Ettrick has succeeded, & when you see an end to her troubles. my best respects to Mrs. Wharton, & compliments to all your family: I will not name them, least I should affront any body. Adieu, dear S^r,

I am most sincerely yours,

TG:

August 26, 1766, Pembroke College.

Mr. Brown is gone to see his Brother near Margate. When is L^d Str:[3] to be married? If M^r and M^rs Jonathan are with you, I desire my compliments.

[1] Anstey's—referred to in the Introduction.

[2] By Sterne's friend, John Hall Stevenson.

[3] Lord Strathmore.

HORACE WALPOLE (1717-1797)

[AND W. M. THACKERAY].

As much has been already said of Horace Walpole's letters, but practically nothing of his other works except his novel and his play, something more may be added here to show that he was not *merely* a "trifler." His private press at "Strawberry" was mainly a means of amusement to him, like a billiard-room or a tennis-court. But it provided some useful books—such as editions of Anthony Hamilton's *Memoirs of Grammont*, of Lord Herbert of Cherbury's *Life* and of part of Gray's *Poems*. He had neither historic knowledge nor historic sense enough to deal satisfactorily with such a subject as *Historic Doubts on Richard III.*, though the subject itself was quite worth dealing with. But his *Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors*, his *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, and his *Catalogue of Engravers* are not without value; and he could usefully handle the history of his own time, with proper corrections for his prejudices, etc. He was weakest of all as a literary critic: and his dealings with Chatterton were most unfortunate, though the mischief done was not intentional, and might not have been serious in any other case. These things have been said with a definite purpose—that of showing that Horace's interests, if seldom deep, were unusually wide. Now though width of interest is not, as Cowper's case shows, indispensable to goodness of letter-writing, it is a very great qualification for it, as giving to the result variety, colour, and "bite." At the same time, unless one had space on a very different scale from any

possible here, it would be *im*possible to illustrate this "extensive curiosity" as they called it then: and Horace ought to be shown here in his *most* native element as a chronicler of "society." I have thought it worth while to subjoin for comparison Thackeray's wonderful *pastiche* in *The Virginians*, which is almost better Horace than Horace himself.[1]

22. To the Countess of Ossory

Arlington Street,
April 31. 1773

IT is most true, madam, that I did purpose to regale myself with a visit to Ampthill; but this winter, which has trod hard upon last week's summer, blunted my intention for a while, though revivable in finer weather. Oh! but I had another reason for changing my mind; you are leaving Ampthill, and I do not mean only to write my name in your park-keeper's book. Yes, in spite of your ladyship's low spirited mood, you are coming from Ampthill, and you are to be at Strawberry Hill to-morrow se'nnight. You may not be in the secret, but Lord Ossory and I have settled it, and you are to be pawned to me while he is at Newmarket. He told me you certainly would if I asked it, and as they used to say in ancient writ, I do beg it upon the knees of my heart. Nay, it is unavoidable; for though a lady's word may be ever so crackable, you cannot have the conscience to break your husband's word, so I depend upon it. I have asked Mr. Craufurd to meet you, but

[1] There is an amicable dispute among Thackerayans whether this or the imitation-*Spectator* paper in *Esmond* is the more wonderful of their joint kind. To facilitate this comparison the letter part (for there is one) of that paper will be given here under Thackeray's own name.

begged he would refuse me, that I might be sure of his coming. Mrs Meynel has taken another year's lease of her house, so you probably, madam, will not be tired of me for the livelong day for the whole time you shall honour my mansion. Your face will be well and your fever gone a week before to-morrow se'nnight, and you will look as well as ever you did in your life, that is, as you have done lately, which is better than ever you did before. You must not, in truth, expect that I your shepherd should be quite so fit to figure in a fan mount. Besides the gout for six months, which makes some flaws in the bloom of elderly Arcadians, I have been so far from keeping sheep for the last ten days, that I have kept nothing but bad hours; and have been such a rake that I put myself in mind of a poor old cripple that I saw formerly at Hogarth's auction: he bid for the Rake's Progress, saying, " I will buy my own progress," though he looked as if he had no more title to it than I have, but by limping and sitting up. In short, I have been at four balls since yesterday se'nnight, though I had the prudence not to stay supper at Lord Stanley's. That festival was very expensive, for it is the fashion now to make romances rather than balls. In the hall was a band of French horns and clarionets in laced uniforms and feathers. The dome of the staircase was beautifully illuminated with coloured glass lanthorns; in the ante-room was a bevy of vestals in white habits, making tea; in the next, a drapery of sarcenet, that with a very funereal air crossed the chimney, and depended in vast festoons over the sconces. The third chamber's doors were heightened with candles in gilt vases, and the ballroom was formed into an oval with benches above each other, not unlike pews, and covered with red serge, above which were arbours of flowers, red

and green pilasters, more sarcenet, and Lord March's glasses, which he had lent, as an upholsterer asked Lord Stanley 300l. for the loan of some. He had burst open the side of the wall to build an orchestra, with a pendant mirror to reflect the dancers, à la Guisnes; and the musicians were in scarlet robes, like the candle-snuffers who represent the senates of Venice at Drury Lane. There were two more chambers at which I never arrived for the crowd. The seasons, danced by himself, the younger Storer, the Duc de Lauzun and another, the youngest Miss Stanley, Miss Poole, the youngest Wrottesley and another Miss, who is likewise anonymous in my memory, were in errant shepherdly dresses without invention, and Storer and Miss Wrottesley in banians with furs, for winter, cock and hen. In six rooms below were magnificent suppers. I was not quite so sober last night at Mons. de Guisnes', where the evening began with a ball of children, from eighteen to four years old. They danced amazingly well, yet disappointed me, so many of them were ugly; but Dr. Delawarr's two eldest daughters and the Ancaster infanta performed a pas de trois as well as Mlle. Heinel, and the two eldest were pretty; yet I promise you, madam, the next age will be a thousand degrees below the present in beauty. The most interesting part was to observe the anxiety of the mothers while their children danced or supped; they supped at ten in three rooms. I should not omit telling you that the Vernons, especially the eldest, were not the homeliest part of the show. The former quadrilles then came again upon the stage, and Harry Conway the younger was so astonished at the agility of Mrs. Hobart's bulk, that he said he was sure she must be hollow. The tables were again spread in five rooms, and at past two in the morning we went to

supper. To excuse *we*, I must plead that both the late and present chancellor, and the solemn Lord Lyttleton, my predecessors by some years, stayed as late as I did—and in good sooth the watchman went four as my chairman knocked at my door.

Such is the result of good resolutions! I determined during my illness to have my colt's tooth drawn, and lo! I have cut four new in a week. Well! at least I am as grave as a judge, looked as rosy as Lord Lyttleton, and much soberer than my Lord Chancellor. To shew some marks of grace, I shall give up the opera, (indeed it is very bad) and go and retake my doctor's degrees among the dowagers at Lady Blandford's; and intending to have no more diversions than I have news to tell your ladyship, I think you shall not hear from me again till we meet, as I shall think it, in heaven.

23. (*Thackeray imitating*). To THE HON. H. S. CONWAY

ARLINGTON STREET, Friday night.

I HAVE come away, child, for a day or two from my devotions to our Lady of Strawberry. Have I not been on my knees to her these three weeks, and aren't the poor old joints full of rheumatism? A fit took me that I would pay London a visit, that I would go to Vauxhall and Ranelagh. *Quoi!* May I not have my rattle as well as other elderly babies? Suppose, after being so long virtuous, I take a fancy to cakes and ale, shall your reverence say nay to me? George Selwyn and Tony Storer and your humble servant took boat at Westminster t'other night. Was it Tuesday?—no, Tuesday I was with their Graces of Norfolk, who are just from Tunbridge—it was Wednesday. How should I know?

Wasn't I dead drunk with a whole pint of lemonade I took at White's?

The Norfolk folk had been entertaining me on Tuesday with the account of a young savage Iroquois, Choctaw, or Virginian, who has lately been making a little noise in our quarter of the globe. He is an offshoot of that disreputable family of Esmond-Castlewood, of whom all the men are gamblers and spendthrifts, and all the women—well, I shan't say the word, lest Lady Ailesbury should be looking over your shoulder. Both the late lords, my father told me, were in his pay, and the last one, a beau of Queen Anne's reign, from a viscount advanced to be an earl through the merits and intercession of his notorious old sister Bernstein, late Tusher, *nee* Esmond—a great beauty, too, of her day, a favourite of the old Pretender. She sold his secrets to my papa, who paid her for them; and being nowise particular in her love for the Stuarts, came over to the august Hanoverian house at present reigning over us. "Will Horace Walpole's tongue never stop scandal?" says your wife over your shoulder. I kiss your ladyship's hand. I am dumb. The Bernstein is a model of virtue. She had no good reasons for marrying her father's chaplain. Many of the nobility omit the marriage altogether. She *wasn't* ashamed of being Mrs. Tusher, and didn't take a German *Baroncino* for a second husband, whom nobody out of Hanover ever saw. The Yarmouth bears no malice. Esther and Vashti are very good friends, and have been cheating each other at Tunbridge at cards all the summer.

"And what has all this to do with the Iroquois?" says your ladyship. The Iroquois has been at Tunbridge, too—not cheating, perhaps, but winning vastly. They say he has bled Lord March of thousands—Lord March, by whom

so much blood hath been shed, that he has quarrelled with everybody, fought with everybody, rode over everybody, been fallen in love with by everybody's wife except Mr. Conway's, and *not* excepting her present Majesty, the Countess of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Queen of Walmoden and Yarmouth, whom heaven preserve to us.

You know an offensive little creature *de par le monde*, one Jack Morris, who skips in and out of all the houses of London. When we were at Vauxhall, Mr. Jack gave us a nod under the shoulder of a pretty young fellow enough, on whose arm he was leaning, and who appeared hugely delighted with the enchantments of the garden. Lord, how he stared at the fireworks! Gods, how he huzzayed at the singing of a horrible painted wench who shrieked the ears off my head! A twopenny string of glass beads and a strip of tawdry cloth are treasures in Iroquois-land, and our savage valued them accordingly.

A buzz went about the place that this was the fortunate youth. He won three hundred at White's last night very genteelly from Rockingham and my precious nephew, and here he was bellowing and huzzaying over the music so as to do you good to hear. I do not love a puppet-show, but I love to treat children to one, Miss Conway! I present your ladyship my compliments, and hope we shall go and see the dolls together.

When the singing-woman came down from her throne, Jack Morris must introduce my Virginian to her. I saw him blush up to the eyes, and make her, upon my word, a very fine bow, such as I had no idea was practised in wigwams. "There is a certain *jenny squaw* about her, and that's why the savage likes her," George said—a joke certainly not as brilliant as a firework. After which it seemed to me that the savage and the savagess retired together.

Having had a great deal too much to eat and drink three hours before, my partners must have chicken and rack-punch at Vauxhall, where George fell asleep straightway, and for my sins I must tell Tony Storer what I knew about this Virginian's amiable family, especially some of the Bernstein's antecedents and the history of another elderly beauty of the family, a certain Lady Maria, who was *au mieux* with the late Prince of Wales. What did I say? I protest not half of what I knew, and of course not a tenth part of what I was going to tell, for who should start out upon us but my savage, this time quite red in the face; and in his *war paint*. The wretch had been drinking fire-water in the next box!

He cocked his hat, clapped his hand to his sword, asked which of the gentlemen was it that was maligning his family? so that I was obliged to entreat him not to make such a noise, lest he should wake my friend Mr. George Selwyn. And I added, "I assure you, sir, I had no idea that you were near me, and I most sincerely apologize for giving you pain."

The Huron took his hand off his tomahawk at this pacific rejoinder, made a bow not ungraciously, said he could not, of course, ask more than an apology from a gentleman of my age (*Merci, Monsieur!*) and, hearing the name of Mr. Selwyn, made another bow to George, and said he had a letter to him from Lord March, which he had had the ill-fortune to mislay. George has put him up for the club, it appears, in conjunction with March, and no doubt these three lambs will fleece each other. Meanwhile, my pacified savage sat down with us, and *buried the hatchet* in another bowl of punch, for which these gentlemen must call. Heaven help us! 'Tis eleven o'clock, and here comes Bedson with my gruel! H.W.

TOBIAS GEORGE SMOLLETT (1721-1771)

SMOLLETT'S reputation has been of course always mainly, indeed almost wholly, that of a novelist, though his miscellaneous work is of no small merit. But that he wrote his best novel *in* letters and that perhaps it is one of the best so written, has been mentioned. His *Travels* are also of the letter-kind—especially of the ill-tempered-letter-kind. Of his actual correspondence we have not much. But the following has always seemed to the present writer an admirable and agreeably characteristic example. Smollett's outwardly surly but inwardly kindly temper, and his command of phrase ("great Cham of literature" has, as we say now, "stuck") both appear in it: and the matter is interesting. We have, so far as I remember, no record of any interview between Johnson and Smollett, though they must have met. They were both Tories, and Johnson wrote in the *Critical Review* which Smollett edited. But Johnson's gibes at Scotland are not likely to have conciliated Smollett: and there was just that combination of likeness and difference between the two men which (especially as the one was as typically English as the other was Scotch) generates incompatibility. How victoriously Wilkes got over Johnson's personal dislike to him all readers of Boswell know: and it is one of the most amusing passages in the book. On this occasion, too, he did what was asked of him. "Frank" had not been *pressed*, but had joined for some reason of his own. However, he accepted his discharge and returned to his master, staying till that master's death.

ects—than this

24. To John Wilkes, Esq.

Chelsea, 16th
pt. 18. 1784.

Dear Sir

I am again your petitioner, in bc great Cham of literature, Samuel Johns v before black servant, whose name is Francis Barber, has s this pressed on board the Stag frigate, Captain Angel, and o it, lexicographer is in great distress. He says the boy is a sickly lad, of a delicate frame, and particularly subject to a malady in his throat, which renders him very unfit for His Majesty's service. You know what matter of animosity the said Johnson has against you: and I dare say you desire no other opportunity of resenting it, than that of laying him under an obligation. He was humble enough to desire my assistance on this occasion, though he and I were never cater-cousins; and I gave him to understand that I would make application to my friend Mr. Wilkes, who, perhaps, by his interest with Dr. Hay and Mr. Elliot, might be able to procure the discharge of his lacquey. It would be superfluous to say more on this subject, which I leave to your own consideration; but I cannot let slip this opportunity of declaring that I am, with the most inviolable esteem and attachment, dear Sir, your affectionate, obliged, humble servant,

T. Smollett.

and pay me for the honey they get out of it by a hum,
which, though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my
ear as the whistling of my linnets. All the sounds that
nature utters are delightful,—at least in this country.
I should not perhaps find the roaring of lions in Africa,
or of bears in Russia, very pleasing; but I know no beast
in England whose voice I do not account musical, save
and ept always the braying of an ass. The notes of
was nirds and fowls please me, without one exception.
etters in not indeed think of keeping a goose in a cage,
him of s night hang him up in the parlour for the sake of
tunate e
if he eve dy, but a goose upon a common, or in a farm-
practicall no bad performer; and as to insects, if the black
centu and beetles indeed of all hues, will keep out of my
displa have no objection to any of the rest; on the
in maki , in whatever key they sing, from the gnat's fine
who mu the bass of the humble bee, I admire them all.
matter, and
satisfaction co wever it strikes me as a very observable
conviction is no rovidential kindness to man, that such an
tion of Art. has been contrived between his ear, and the
aults to be found ich, at least in a rural situation, it is
an be an artist: ment visited. All the world is sensible
his or that extent in le effect that certain sounds have upon
nd best interpretation, ently upon the spirits:—and if a
oth—can enjoy an artist's led with such as would have
portant function of the ofte he sense of hearing
an "bringing out" this sense when it ow that we should
aining and developing it when it is br
w things are more useful for exercise in now the fields, the
nder-current of artistry in Cowper's oncert, and the ear
tters are so familiar that it is vain to who seem only to
riginality in selecting them. The follow at are deaf to the
n excellent example. What more trite ough without know-
creased expense of postage (rather no
ow though!) and remarks on a greenho lely indebted to its

author. There is somewhere in infinite space a world that does not roll within the precincts of mercy, and as it is reasonable, and even scriptural, to suppose that there is music in Heaven, in those dismal regions perhaps the reverse of it is found; tones so dismal, as to make woe itself more insupportable, and to acuminate[1] even despair. But my paper admonishes me in good time to draw the reins, and to check the descent of my fancy into deeps, with which she is but too familiar.

Our best love attends you both, with yours,

Sum ut semper, tui studiossimus,

W.C.

[1] "Acuminate" = "sharpen," is a perfectly good word in itself, but perhaps does not so perfectly suit "despair," which crushes rather than pierces.

SYDNEY SMITH (1771-1845)

It has been said of Sydney Smith that he was not only a humourist, but a "good-humourist," and this is undoubtedly true. Politics, indeed, according to their usual custom, sometimes rather acidulated his good humour; but anybody possessed of the noun, with the least allowance of the adjective, should be propitiated by the way in which the almost Radical reformer of *Peter Plymley's Letters* in 1807 became the almost Tory and wholly conservative maintainer of ecclesiastical rights in those to Archdeacon Singleton thirty years later.

Both, however, were "Letters" of the sophisticated kind: but we have plenty of perfectly genuine correspondence, also agreeable and sometimes extremely amusing. Whether Sydney (his friends always abbreviated him thus, and he accepted the Christian name) describes the make-shifts of his Yorkshire parish or the luxuries of his Somerset one; whether he discusses the effect of a diet of geraniums on pigs or points out that as Lord Tankerville has given him a whole buck "this takes up a great deal of my time"—he is always refreshing. He has no great depth, but we do not go to him for that: and he is not shallow in the offensive sense of the word. His gaiety does not get on one's nerves as does that of some—perhaps most—professional jokers: neither, as is too frequently the case with them, does it bore. His letters are not the easiest to select from: for they are usually short and their excellence lies rather in still shorter *flashes* such as those glanced at above; as the grave proposition that "the information of very plain women is so inconsiderable that I agree with you in setting

no store by it;" or as this other (resembling a short newspaper paragraph) "The Commissioner will have hard work with the Scotch atheists: they are said to be numerous this season and in great force, from the irregular supply of rain." But the following specimens are fairly representative. They were written at an interval of about ten years: the first from Foston, the second from Combe Florey. "Miss Berry," the elder of the famous sisters who began by fascinating Horace Walpole and ended by charming Thackeray: "Donna Agnes" was the younger. "Lady Rachel," the famous wife of the person who suffered for the Rye House plot (Lady Rachel Wriothesley, or Rachel Lady Russell, but Miss Berry had written a *Life* of her under her maiden name). Sydney's politics show in his allusion to the assassination of the Duc de Berri, son of Charles X. of France (who had, however, not then come to the throne); in his infinitely greater sorrow for the dismissal of the mildly Liberal minister Decazes; and in his spleen at the supporters of the English Tory government of Lord Liverpool. (The "little plot" was Thistlewood's). In the second letter the "hotel" is his new parsonage in Somerset: "Bowood," Lord Lansdowne's Wiltshire house, a great Whig rallying place. I suppose "Sea-shore Calcott" is Sir A. W. Calcott the painter. "Luttrell" (Henry), a talker and versifier very well known in his own day, but of less enduring reputation than some others. "Napier's Book," the brilliant if somewhat partisan *History of the Peninsular War.* I am not quite certain in which of two senses Sydney uses the word *caractère*. As ought to be well known this does not exactly correspond to our "character"—but most commonly means "temper" or "disposition." It has, however, a peculiar technical meaning of "official description" or "estimate" which would suit Sir William Napier well. The Napiers were "kittle cattle" from the official point of view.

26. To Miss Berry

Foston, Feb 27th, 1820.

I THANK you very much for the entertainment I have received from your book. I should however have been afraid to marry such a woman as Lady Rachel; it would have been too awful. There are pieces of china very fine and beautiful, but never intended for daily use . . .

I have hardly slept out of Foston since I saw you. God send I may be still an animal, and not a vegetable! but I am a little uneasy at this season for sprouting and rural increase, for I fear I should have undergone the metamorphose so common in country livings. I shall go to town about the end of March; it will be completely empty, and the drugs that remain will be entirely occupied about hustings and returning-officers.

Commerce and manufacturers are still in a frightful state of stagnation.

> No foreign barks in British ports are seen,
> Stuff'd to the water's edge with velveteen,
> Or bursting with big bales of bombazine;
> No distant climes demand our corduroy,
> Unmatch'd habiliment for man and boy;
> No fleets of fustian quit the British shore,
> The cloth-creating engines cease to roar,
> Still is that loom which breech'd the world before.

I am very sorry for the little fat Duke de Berri, but infinitely more so for the dismissal of De Cases,—a fatal measure.

I must not die without seeing Paris. Figure to yourself what a horrid death,—to die without seeing Paris! I think I could make something of this in a tragedy, so as

to draw tears from Donna Agnes and yourself. Where are you going to? When do you return? Why do you go at all? Is Paris more agreeable than London?

We have had a little plot here in a hay-loft. God forbid anybody should be murdered! but, if I were to turn assassin, it should not be of five or six Ministers, who are placed where they are by the folly of the country gentlemen, but of the hundred thousand squires, to whose stupidity and folly such an Administration owes its existence.

Ever your friend,
SYDNEY SMITH.

27. TO N. FAZAKERLY, ESQ.

COMBE FLOREY, October, 1829.

DEAR FAZAKERLY,

I don't know anybody who would be less affronted at being called hare-brained than our friend who has so tardily conveyed my message, and I am afraid now he has only given you a part of it. The omission appears to be, that I had set up an hotel on the Western road, that it would be opened next spring, and I hoped for the favour of yours and Mrs. Fazakerly's patronage. "Well-aired beds, neat wines, careful drivers, etc. etc."

I shall have very great pleasure in coming to see you, and I quite agree in the wisdom of postponing that event till the rural Palladios and Vitruvii are chased away; I have fourteen of them here every day. The country is perfectly beautiful, and my parsonage the prettiest place in it.

I was at Bowood last week: the only persons there

were seashore Calcott and his wife,—two very sensible, agreeable people. Luttrell came over for the day; he was very agreeable, but spoke too lightly, I thought, of veal soup. I took him aside, and reasoned the matter with him, but in vain; to speak the truth, Luttrell is not steady in his judgments on dishes. Individual failures with him soon degenerate into generic objections, till, by some fortunate accident, he eats himself into better opinions. A person of more calm reflection thinks not only of what he is consuming at the moment, but of the soups of the same kind he has met with in a long course of dining, and which have gradually and justly elevated the species. I am perhaps making too much of this; but the failures of a man of sense are always painful.

I quite agree about Napier's book. I do [1] not think that any [1] man would venture to write so true, bold, and honest a book; it gave me a high idea of his understanding, and makes me very anxious about his *caractère*

Ever yours,

SYDNEY SMITH.

[1] One would expect either "did" or "other": but the actual combination is a very likely slip of pen or press.

SIR WALTER SCOTT (1771-1832)

SINCE this little book was undertaken it has been announced, truly or not, that the bulk of Scott's autograph letters has been bought by a fortunate and wise man of letters for the sum of £1500. Neither life nor literature can ever be expressed in money value: but if one had £1500 to spend on something not directly necessary, it is possible to imagine a very large number of less satisfactory purchases. For as was briefly suggested in the Introduction, Scott's letters—while saturated with that singular humanity and nobility of character in which he has hardly a rival among authors of whom we know much—are distinctly remarkable from the purely literary point of view. His published work, both in verse and prose, has been accused (with what amount of justice we will not here trouble ourselves to discuss)—of carelessness in style and art. No such charge could possibly be brought against his letters, which hit the happy mean between slovenliness and artificial elaboration in a fashion that could hardly be bettered. The great variety of his correspondents, too, provides an additional attraction: for letters indited to the same person are apt to show a certain monotony. And Scott is equal to any and every occasion. Here as elsewhere the "Diary" drains off a certain proportion of matter: but chiefly for the latest period and in circumstances scarcely happy enough for letters themselves.

The following letter was selected because of its admirable treatment of a theme—the behaviour, responsibility, and general *status* of Authors as objects of public judgment—on which an infinite amount of deplorable and disgusting

nonsense has been talked and written. It starts, as will be seen, with the quarrel between Lord and Lady Byron – and then generalises. Not many things show Scott's golden equity and fairness better. He is perhaps "a little kind" to Campbell, who was, one fears, an extra-irritable specimen of the irritable race: but this is venial. And probably he did not mean the stigma which might be inferred from the conjunction of "Aphra *and* Orinda." They were certainly both of Charles II.'s time: but while poor Aphra was, if not wholly vicious, far from virtuous, the "matchless Orinda" (Katherine Philips) bears no stain on her character.

28. To Joanna Baillie

(End of April 1816)

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am glad you are satisfied with my reasons for declining a direct interference with Lord B[yron]. I have not, however, been quite idle, and as an old seaman have tried to go by a side wind when I had not the means of going before it, and this will be so far plain to you when I say that I have every reason to believe the good intelligence is true that a separation is signed between Lord and Lady Byron. If I am not as angry as you have good reason to expect every thinking and feeling man to be, it is from deep sorrow and regret that a man possessed of such noble talents should so utterly and irretrievably lose himself. In short, I believe the thing to be as you state it, and therefore Lord Byron is the object of anything rather than indignation. It is a cruel pity that such high talents should have been joined to a mind so wayward and incapable of seeking control where alone it is to be found, in the quiet discharge of domestic duties and filling up in peace and affection his

station in society. The idea of his ultimately resisting that which should be fair and honourable to Lady B. did not come within my view of his character—at least of his natural character; but I hear that, as you intimated, he has had execrable advisers. I hardly know a more painful object of consideration than a man of genius in such a situation; those of lower minds do not feel the degradation, and become like pigs, familiarised with the filthy elements in which they grovel; but it is impossible that a man of Lord Byron's genius should not often feel the want of that which he has forfeited—the fair esteem of those by whom genius most naturally desires to be admired and cherished.

I am much obliged to Mrs. Baillie for excluding me ir her general censure of authors; but I should have hoped for a more general spirit of toleration from my good friend, who had in her own family and under her own eye such an exception to her general censure—unless, indeed (which may not be far from the truth), she supposes that female genius is more gentle and tractable, though as high in tone and spirit as that of the masculine sex. But the truth is, I believe, we will find a great equality when the different habits of the sexes and the temptations they are exposed to are taken into consideration. Men early flattered and coaxed, and told they are fitted for the higher regions of genius and unfit for anything else,—that they are a superior kind of automaton and ought to move by different impulses than others,—indulge their friends and the public with freaks and caprioles like those of that worthy knight of La Mancha in the Sierra Morena. And then, if our man of genius escapes this temptation, how is he to parry the opposition of the blockheads who join all their hard heads and horns together to butt him out

of the ordinary pasture, goad him back to Parnassus, and "bid him on the barren mountain starve." It is amazing how far this goes, if a man will let it go, in turning him out of the ordinary course of life into the stream of odd bodies, so that authors come to be regarded as tumblers, who are expected to go to church in a summerset, because they sometimes throw a Catherine-wheel for the amusement of the public. A man even told me at an election, thinking I believe he was saying a severe thing, that I was a poet, and therefore that the subject we were discussing lay out of my way. I answered as quietly as I could, that I did not apprehend my having written poetry rendered me incapable of speaking common sense in prose, and that I requested the audience to judge of me not by the nonsense I might have written for their amusement, but by the sober sense I was endeavouring to speak for their information, and only expected [of] them, in case I had ever happened to give any of them pleasure, in a way which was supposed to require some information and talent, [that] they would not, for that sole reason, suppose me incapable of understanding or explaining a point of the profession for which I had been educated. So I got a patient and very favourable hearing. But certainly these great exertions of friends and enemies have forced many a poor fellow out of the common paths of life, and obliged him to make a trade of what can only be gracefully executed as an occasional avocation. When such a man is encouraged in all his freaks and follies, the bit is taken out of his mouth, and, as he is turned out upon the common, he is very apt to deem himself exempt from all the rules incumbent on those who keep the king's highway. And so they play fantastic tricks before high heaven.

The lady authors are not exempt from these vagaries, being exposed to the same temptations; and all I can allow Mrs. Baillie in favour of the fair sex is that since the time of the Aphras and Orindas of Charles II's time, the authoresses have been ridiculous only, while the authors have too often been both absurd and vicious. As to our leal friend Tom Campbell, I have heard stories of his morbid sensibility chiefly from the Minto family, with whom he lived for some time, and I think they all turned on little foolish points of capricious affectation, which perhaps had no better foundation than an ill-imagined mode of exhibiting his independence. But whatever I saw of him myself—and we were often together, and sometimes for several days—was quite composed and manly. Indeed, I never worried him to make him get on his hind legs and spout poetry when he did not like it. He deserves independence well; and if the dog which now awakens him to the recollection of his possessing it, happened formerly to disturb the short sleep that drowned his recollection of so great a blessing, there is good reason for enduring the disturbance with more patience than before.

But surely, admitting all our temptations and irregularities there are men of genius enough living to restrain the mere possession of talent from the charge of disqualifying the owner for the ordinary occupation and duties of life. There never were better men, and especially better husbands, fathers, and real patriots, than Southey and Wordsworth; they might even be pitched upon as most exemplary characters. I myself, if I may rank myself in the list, am, as Hamlet says, indifferent honest, and at least not worse than an infidel in loving those of my own house. And I think that generally speaking,

authors, like actors, being rather less commonly believed to be eccentric than was the faith fifty years since, do conduct themselves as amenable to the ordinary rules of society.

This tirade was begun a long time since, but is destined to be finished at Abbotsford. Your bower is all planted with its evergreens, but must for seven years retain its original aspect of a gravel pit.

(Rest lost.)

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE (1772-1834)

It is a strange thing, and could hardly have happened in any country but England, that there is to this day no complete collection or edition of the works of Coleridge—one of the most poetical of our poets, one of the most important of our critics, and one of the most influential, if one of the least methodical and conclusive, of our philosophers. Indeed we never knew what good prose he could write till the fragments called *Anima Poetae* were published, two-thirds of a century after his death. But that no collected edition of his letters appeared till very shortly before this is explicable without any difficulty. Coleridge's temperament was not heroic, and his correspondence as well as his conduct justified, in regard to much more than his nonage, the ingenious phrase of an American lady-essayist that he must have been "a very *beatable* child." To a certain extent, however, the correspondence does also justify our adoption (see *Introduction*) of the charitable theory that enlargement of understanding brings about extension of pardon. And putting this aside, the letters sometimes give us an idea of what his admittedly marvellous conversation (or rather monologue) must have been like. They are not very easy to select from, for their author's singular tendency to *divagation* affects them. But they sometimes display that humour which he undoubtedly possessed, though his best-known published writings seldom admit of it: and the divagation itself has its advantages. In the following Coleridge appears in curiously different lights. After joking at his own Pantheism he becomes amazingly practical, for it *was*, as Scott points

out somewhere, a fault of Southey's to cling to the system of "half-profits," a fault which often made his enormous labours altogether unprofitable. "I-rise to I-set" = "getting-up to bed-time" seems to have been a favourite quip of his. "Stuart," the Editor of the *Morning Post* for which Coleridge was then writing. "The Anthology"—an *Annual* one edited by Southey. As for the *Anti-Jacobin* libel it was, admirable as was the wit that accompanied it, utterly indefensible; for it accused Coleridge of having *at this time* "left his poor children fatherless and his wife destitute" (the extraordinary thing is that he actually did this later!) Of course he never executed the Life of Lessing.[1] "The Wedgwoods" had given him an annuity. The assault on "Mr. Go*b*win" is one of poor Hartley Coleridge's most delightful feats. Had he been a little older, he might have pointed out to the author of *Political Justice* that lecturing his mother for his, Hartley's, fault was quite unjustifiable: and indeed that objecting to it at all was improper. The right way (according to that great work itself) would have been to discuss with Hartley whether the advantage in physical exercise and animal spirits derived by him from wielding the nine-pin, outweighed the pain experienced by Go*b*win, and so was justifiable on the total scheme of things. ("Moshes," as indeed is obvious, was Hartley's pet-name).

29. To Robert Southey

Tuesday night, 12 o'clock
(December 24) 1799.

MY DEAR SOUTHEY,

My Spinosism (if Spinosism it be, and i' faith 'tis very like it) disposed me to consider this big city as that part of the supreme One which the prophet

[1] I cannot remember whether anybody has ever made a list of the books that Coleridge did not write. It would be the catalogue of a most interesting library in Utopia.

Moses was allowed to see—I should be more disposed to pull off my shoes, beholding Him in a *Bush*, than while I am forcing my reason to believe that even in theatres *He* is, yea ! even in the Opera House. Your " Thalaba " will beyond all doubt bring you two hundred pounds, if you will sell it at once ; but *do* not print at a venture, under the notion of selling the edition. I assure you that Longman regretted the bargain he made with Cottle concerning the second edition of the " Joan of Arc," and is indisposed to similar negotiations ; but most and very eager to have the property of your works at almost any price. If you have not heard it from Cottle, why, you may hear it from me, that is, the arrangement of Cottle's affairs in London. The whole and total copyright of your " Joan," and the first volume of your poems (exclusive of what Longman had before given), was taken by him at three hundred and seventy pounds. You are a strong swimmer, and have borne up poor Joey with all his leaden weights about him, his own and other people's ! Nothing has answered to him but your works. By me he has lost somewhat—by Fox, Amos, and himself *very much*. I can sell your " Thalaba " quite as well in your absence as in your presence. I am employed from I-rise to I-set (that is, from nine in the morning to twelve at night), a pure scribbler. My mornings to booksellers' compilations, after dinner to Stuart, who pays *all* my expenses here, let them be what they will ; the earnings of the morning go to make up an hundred and fifty pounds for my year's expenditure ; for, supposing *all clear*, my year's (1800) allowance is anticipated. But this I can do by the first of April (at which time I leave London). For Stuart I write often his leading paragraphs on Secession, Peace, Essay on the new French Constitution, Advice to Friends of

Freedom, Critiques on Sir W. Anderson's Nose, Ode to Georgiana D. of D. (horribly misprinted), Christmas Carols, etc., etc.—anything not bad in the paper, that is not yours, is mine. So if any verses there strike you as worthy the "Anthology," "do me the honour, sir!" However, in the course of a week I *do mean* to conduct a series of essays in that paper which may be of public utility. So much for myself, except that I long to be out of London; and that my Xstmas Carol is a quaint performance, and, in as strict a sense as is *possible*, an Impromptu, and, had I done all I had planned, that "Ode to the Duchess" would have been a better thing than it is—it being somewhat dullish, etc. I have bought the "Beauties of the Anti-jacobin," and attorneys and counsellors advise me to prosecute, and offer to undertake it, so as that I shall have neither trouble or expense. They say it is a clear case, etc. I will speak to Johnson about the "Fears in Solitude." If he gives them up they are yours. That dull ode has been printed often enough, and may now be allowed to "sink with deep swoop, and to the bottom *go*," to quote an admired author; but the two others will do with a little trimming.

'My dear Southey! I have said nothing concerning that which most oppresses me. Immediately on my leaving London I fall to the "Life of Lessing"; till that is done, till I have given the Wedgwoods some proof that I am *endeavouring* to do well for my fellow-creatures, I cannot stir. That being done, I would accompany you, and see no impossibility of forming a pleasant little colony for a few years in Italy or the South of France. Peace will come soon. God love you, my dear Southey! I would write to Stuart, and give up his paper immediately. You should do nothing that did not absolutely *please* you. Be

idle, be very idle! The habits of your mind are such that you will necessarily do much; but be as idle as you can.

Our love to dear Edith. If you see Mary, tell her that we have received our trunk. Hartley is quite well, and my talkativeness is his, without diminution on my side. 'Tis strange but certainly many things go in the blood, beside gout and scrophula. Yesterday I dined at Longman's and met Pratt, and that honest piece of prolix dullity and nullity, young Towers, who desired to be remembered to you. To-morrow Sara and I dine at Mister Gobwin's, as Hartley calls him, who gave the philosopher such a rap on the shins with a ninepin that Gobwin in huge pain *lectured* Sara on his boisterousness. I was not at home. *Est modus in rebus* Moshes is somewhat too rough and noisy, but the cadaverous silence of Gobwin's children is to me quite catacombish, and, thinking of Mary Wollstonecraft, I was oppressed by it the day Davy and I dined there.

God love you and

S. T. Coleridge.

ROBERT SOUTHEY (1774-1843)

One of the strangest things met by the present writer in the course of preparing this book was a remark of the late Mr. Scoones—an old acquaintance and a man who has deserved most excellently on the subject—in reference to Southey's letters, that they show the author as "dry and unsympathetic." "They contain too much information to be good as letters." Well: there certainly is information in the specimen that follows: whether it is "dry" or not readers must decide. The fact is that Southey, despite occasional touches of self-righteousness and of over-bookishness, was full of humour, extraordinarily affectionate, and extremely natural. There is moreover a great deal of interest in this skit on poor Mrs. Coleridge: for "lingos" of the kind, though in her case they may have helped to disgust her husband with his "pensive Sara," were in her time and afterwards by no means uncommon, especially—physiologists must say why—with the female sex. The present writer, near the middle of the nineteenth century, knew a lady of family, position and property who was fond of the phrase, "hail-fellow-well-met," but always turned it into "Fellowship Wilmot"—a pretty close parallel to "horsemangander" for "horse-godmother." Extension—with levelling—of education, and such processes as those which have turned "Sissiter" into "Syrencesster" and "Kirton" into "Credd-itt-on," have made the phenomenon rarer: but have also made such a *locus classicus* of the habit as this all the more valuable and amusing. It may be added that Lamb, in one of his letters, has a sly if good-natured glance at this peculiarity of the elder Sara Coleridge in reference to the aptitude of the younger in her "*mother-*

tongue." Southey has dealt with the matter in several epistles to his friend Grosvenor Bedford. The whole would have been rather long but the following mosaic will, I think, do very well. Dr. Warter, the editor of the supplementary collection of Southey's letters from which it comes, was the husband of Edith May Southey, the heroine of not a little literature, sometimes[1] in connection, not merely as here with Sara Coleridge the younger, but with Dora Wordsworth—the three daughters of the three Lake Poets. She was, as her father says, a very tall girl, while her aunt, Mrs. Coleridge, was little (her husband, writing from Hamburg, speaks with surprise of some German lady as "smaller than you are").

30. To Grosvenor C. Bedford Esq:

Keswick, Sep. 14, 1821

DEAR STUMPARUMPER,

Don't rub your eyes at that word, Bedford, as if you were slopy. The purport of this letter, which is to be as precious as the Punic scenes in Plautus, is to give you some account (though but an imperfect one) of the language spoken in this house by . . . and invented by her. I have carefully composed a vocabulary of it by the help of her daughter and mine, having my ivory tablets always ready when she is red-raggifying in full confabulumpatus.

31. To Grosvenor C. Bedford Esq:

Keswick, Oct. 7, 1821.

MY DEAR G,

I very much approve your laudable curiosity to know the precise meaning of that noble word *horsemangandering*. Before I tell you its

[1] See Wordsworth's *Triad*.

application, you must be informed of its history and origin. Be it therefore known unto you that . . the whole and sole inventor of the never-to-be-forgotten *ingo grande* (in which, by the bye, I purpose ere long to compose a second epistle), thought proper one day to call my daughter a great *horsemangander*, thinking, I suppose, that that appellation contained as much unfeminine meaning as could be put into any decent compound. From this substantive the verb has been formed to denote an operation performed by the said daughter upon the said aunt, of which I was an astonished spectator. The horsemangander—that is to say, Edith May—being tall and strong, came behind the person to be horsemangandered (to wit, . . .), and took her round the waist, under the arms, then jumped with her all the way from the kitchen into the middle of the parlour; the motion of the horsemangandered person at every jump being something like that of a paviour's rammer, and all resistance impossible.

32. To Grosvenor C. Bedford Esq:

Keswick, Oct 8, 1821.

. . . .

P.S. The name of the newly-discovered language (of which I have more to say hereafter) is the *lingo grande*.

33. To Grosvenor C. Bedford Esq:

Keswick, Dec. 24, 1822

Dear Stumparumper,

So long a time has elapsed since I sent you the commencement of my remarks upon the peculiar language spoken by . . . which I have denominated the LINGO-GRANDE, that I fear you may suppose

that I have altogether neglected the subject. Yet such a subject, as you must perceive, requires a great deal of patient observation, as well as of attentive consideration; and were I to flustercumhurry over it, as if it were a matter which could be undercumstood in a jiffump (that is to say in a momper), this would be to do what I have undertaken shabroonily, and you might shartainly have reason to think me fuffling and indiscruckt. Upon my vurtz I have not dumdawdled with it, like a dangleampeter; which being interpreted in the same *lingo* is an undecider, or an improvidentur, too idle to explore the hurtch mine which he has had the fortune to discover. No, I must be a stupossum indeed to act thus, as well as a slouwdowdekcum, or slowdonothinger; and these are appellations which she has never bestowed upon me; though, perhaps, the uncommon richness, and even exuberance of her language has not been more strikingly displayed in anything than in the variety of names which it has enabled her to shower upon my devoted person.

....

And so-o-o,

Dear Miscumter Bedfordiddlededford,

I subcumscribe myself,

Your sincumcere friendiddledend and serdiddledeservant,

ROBCUMBERT SOUTHEY DIDDLEDOUTHEY.

Student in the Lingo-Grande, Graduate in Butlerology, Professor of the science of Noncumsensediddledense, of sneezing and of vocal music, P.L. and LL.D. etc etc.

CHARLES LAMB (1775-1834)

THERE are not many people about whom it is more difficult—or more unnecessary—to write than it is about Lamb. A few very unfortunate people do not enjoy him, and probably never could be made to do so. Most of those who care for literature at all revel in him: and do not in the least need to be told to do so. And, as was said before, there is hardly any difference between his published works and his letters except that the former stand a little—a very little—more "upon ceremony." As to selecting the letters one remembers Mr. Matthew Arnold's very agreeable confession, when he was asked to select his poems, that he wanted to select them all. This being impossible, one has to confess that, putting subject, scale etc. aside, any one is almost as tempting as any other, and that whatever is chosen reminds one, half-regretfully, of the letters that were left. When a man can write (to William Wordsworth too), "The very head and sum of the girlery were two young girls," there is nothing left to do but to repeat, with the slight alteration of "write to" for "ask," Thackeray's ejaculation to the supposed host at an unusually satisfactory dinner, "Dear Sir! do *ask* us again." And on almost every page of his letters, whether in Talfourd's original issue of them or in the more recent and fuller editions of his works, the spirit is the same everywhere: the volume only differs. If (but you never know exactly when Lamb is speaking seriously) at the time he had "an aversion from letter writing," then most certainly Mrs. Malaprop was justified in saying that there "is nothing like beginning with a little aversion"! The letter which follows is, though it may have pleased others besides myself,

not one of the stock examples. But it seems to me to present a rather unusual combination of Lamb's attractive qualities, not a little of his rare phrase ("divine plain face" especially) and a remarkable expression of that yearning for *solitude* which some people seem to think rather shameful, but which to others is a thing no more to be accounted for than it is to be got rid of. It will be observed that the letter, ostensibly to Mrs. W., is really both to her and to her husband. "W. H." is of course Hazlitt, and the "lectures" are his famous ones on English Poets. As for Lamb's criticisms on lectures generally, they would perhaps be endorsed by some who have given, as well as by many who have received, this form of instruction. The "gentleman at Haydon's" was the hero or victim of a story good, but too long to give here. He said some excessively foolish things and Lamb, after dinner, behaved to him in a fashion possibly not quite undeserved but entirely unsanctioned by the conventions of society.

34. To Mrs. Wordsworth

East India House.
February 18, 1818.

MY DEAR MRS. WORDSWORTH,

I have repeatedly taken pen in hand to answer your kind letter. My sister should more properly have done it, but she having failed, I consider myself answerable for her debts. I am now trying to do it in the midst of commercial noises, and with a quill which seems more ready to glide into arithmetical figures and names of gourds, cassia, cardamoms, aloes, ginger, or tea, than into kindly responses and friendly recollections. The reason why I cannot write letters at home is, that I am never alone. Plato's (I write to W.W. now)—Plato's double animal parted never longed more to be reciprocally

re-united in the system of its first creation than I sometimes do to be but for a moment single and separate. Except my morning's walk to the office, which is like treading on sands of gold for that reason, I am never so. I cannot walk home from office but some officious friend offers his unwelcome courtesies to accompany me. All the morning I am pestered. I could sit and gravely cast up sums in great books, or compare sum with sum, and write "paid" against this, and "unpaid" against t'other, and yet reserve in some corner of my mind "some darling thoughts all my own,"—faint memory of some passage in a book, or the tone of an absent friend's voice—a snatch of Miss Burrell's singing, or a gleam of Fanny Kelly's divine plain face. The two operations might be going on at the same time without thwarting, as the sun's two motions (earth's I mean), or as I sometimes turn round till I am giddy, in my back parlour, while my sister is walking longitudinally in the front; or as the shoulder of veal twists round with the spit, while the smoke wreathes up the chimney. But there are a set of amateurs of the Belles Lettres—the gay science—who come to me as a sort of rendezvous, putting questions of criticism, of British Institutions, Lalla Rookhs, etc,—what Coleridge said at the lecture last night—who have the form of reading men, but, for any possible use reading can be to them, but to talk of, might as well have been Ante-Cadmeans born, or have lain sucking out the sense of an Egyptian hieroglyph as long as the pyramids will last, before they should find it. These pests worrit me at business, and in all its intervals, perplexing my accounts, poisoning my little salutary warming-time at the fire, puzzling my paragraphs if I take a newspaper, cramming in between my own free thoughts and a column of figures

which had come to an amicable compromise but for them. Their noise ended, one of them, as I said, accompanies me home, lest I should be solitary for a moment; he at length takes his welcome leave at the door; up I go, mutton on table, hungry as hunter, hope to forget my cares, and bury them in the agreeable abstraction of mastication; knock at the door, in comes Mr. Hazlitt, or Mr. Martin Burney, or Morgan Demigorgon, or my brother, or somebody, to prevent my eating alone—a process absolutely necessary to my poor wretched digestion. O the pleasure of eating alone!—eating my dinner alone! let me think of it. But in they come, and make it absolutely necessary that I should open a bottle of orange; for my meat turns into stone when any one dines with me, if I have not wine. Wine can mollify stones; then *that* wine turns into acidity, acerbity, misanthropy, a hatred of my interrupters—(God bless 'em! I love some of 'em dearly), and with the hatred, a still greater aversion to their going away. Bad is the dead sea they bring upon me, choking and deadening, but worse is the deader dry sand they leave me on, if they go before bed-time. Come never, I would say to those spoilers of my dinner; but if you come, never go! The fact is, this interruption does not happen very often; but every time it comes by surprise, that present bane of my life, orange wine, with all its dreary stifling consequences, follows. Evening company I should always like had I any mornings, but I am saturated with human faces (*divine* forsooth!) and voices all the golden morning; and five evenings in a week would be as much as I should covet to be in company; but I assure you that is a wonderful week in which I can get two, or one to myself. I am never C.L. but always C.L. and Co. He who thought it not good for man to be

alone, preserve me from the more prodigious monstrosity of being never by myself! I forget bed-time, but even there these sociable frogs clamber up to annoy me. Once a week, generally some singular evening that, being alone, I go to bed at the hour I ought always to be a-bed; just close to my bedroom window is the club-room of a public-house, where a set of singers, I take them to be chorus-singers of the two theatres (it must be both of them), begin their orgies. They are a set of fellows (as I conceive) who, being limited by their talents to the burthen of the song at the play-houses, in revenge have got the common popular airs by Bishop, or some cheap composer, arranged for choruses; that is, to be sung all in chorus. At least I never can catch any of the text of the plain song, nothing but the Babylonish choral howl at the tail on't. "That fury being quenched"—the howl, I mean—a burden succeeds of shouts and clapping, and knocking of the table. At length overtasked nature drops under it, and escapes for a few hours into the societ of the sweet silent creatures of dreams, which go away erved cu ks and mows at cock-crow. And then I think little sh rds Christabel's father used (bless me, I have dipt ful for rong ink!) to say every morning by way of variet he awoke:

> "Every knell, t on saith,
> Wakes us up to a world of death"

or something like it. All I mean by this senseless interrupted tale, is, that by my central situation I am a little over-companied. Not that I have any animosity against the good creatures that are so anxious to drive away the harpy solitude from me. I like 'em, and cards, and a cheerful glass; but I mean merely to give you an idea, between office confinement and after-office society, how

little time I can call my own. I mean only to draw a picture, not to make an inference. I would not that I know of have it otherwise. I only wish sometimes I could exchange some of my faces and voices for the faces and voices which a late visitation brought most welcome, and carried away, leaving regret, but more pleasure, even a kind of gratitude, at being so often favoured with that kind northern visitation. My London faces and noises don't hear me—I mean no disrespect, or I should explain myself, that instead of their return 220 times a year, and the return of W.W. etc., seven times in 104 weeks, some more equal distribution might be found. I have scarce room to put in Mary's kind love, and my poor name,

C. LAMB.

W.H. goes on lecturing against W.W. and making copious use of quotations from said W.W. to give a zest to said lectures. S.T.C. is lecturing with success. I have not heard either of him or H., but dined with S.T.C. at Gillman's a Sunday or [illegible]e, and he was well and in good spirits. I mean [illegible] some of the course but lectures are not muc[illegible] my taste, whatever the lecturer may be. If re[illegible]y are dismal flat, and you can't think why you are [illegible]ught together to hear a man read his works, which you could read so much better at leisure yourself. If delivered extempore I am always in pain lest the gift of utterance should suddenly fail the orator in the middle, as it did me at the dinner given in honour of me at the London tavern.[1] "Gentlemen," said I,

[1] Lamb would have enjoyed a recent newspaper paragraph which, stating that an inquest had been held on some one who, after lecturing somewhere was taken ill and expired, concluded thus: "Verdict: death from natural causes."

and there I stopped; the rest my feelings were under the necessity of supplying. Mrs. Wordsworth *will* go on, kindly haunting us with visions of seeing the lakes once more, which never can be realised. Between us there is a great gulf, not of inexplicable moral antipathies and distances, I hope, as there seemed to be between me and that gentleman concerned in the Stamp Office, that I so strangely recoiled from at Haydon's. I think I had an instinct that he was the head of an office. I hate all such people—accountants' deputy-accountants. The dear abstract notion of the East India Company, as long as she is unseen, is pretty, rather poetical; but as she makes herself manifest by the persons of such beasts, I loathe and detest her as the scarlet what-do-you-call-her of Babylon. I thought, after abridging us of all our red-letter days, they had done their worst; but I was deceived in the length to which heads of offices, those true liberty-haters, can go. They are the tyrants; not Ferdinand, nor Nero. By a decree passed this week they have abridged us of the immemorially-observed custom of going at one o'clock of a Saturday, the little shadow of a holiday left us. Dear W.W., be thankful for liberty.

GEORGE GORDON, LORD BYRON (1788-1824)

It is one of the commonest of commonplaces that there are certain subjects and persons who and which always cause difference of opinion; and something like a full century has established the fact that Byron is one of them. As far as his poetry is concerned we have nothing to do with this difference or these differences. They affect his letters less, inasmuch as almost everybody admits them to be remarkably good of their kind. But when the further questions are raised, "What *is* that kind?" and "Is it the best, or even a very good kind?" the old division manifests itself again. That they are extraordinarily *clever* is again more or less matter of agreement. That they make some people dislike him more than they otherwise might is perhaps not a fatal objection: for the people may be wrong. Besides, as a matter of fact, they sometimes make other people *like* him more than they would have done without these letters: so the two things at least cancel each other. The chief objection to them, which is hardly removable, is their too frequent artificiality. Byron did not play the tricks that Pope played: for, he was not, like Pope, an invalid with an invalid's weaknesses and excuses. But almost more than in his poems, where the "dramatic" excuse is available, (*i.e.* that the writer is speaking not for himself but for the character) the letters provoke the question, "Is this what the man thought, felt, did, or what he wished to seem to feel, think, do?" In other words, "Is this *persona* or *res*?" The following shows Byron in perhaps as favourable a light as any that could be chosen, and with as little of the artificiality as is anywhere to be

found. It is true that even here Moore, his biographer and letter-giver, at first included, though he afterwards cut out, some attacks on Sir Samuel Romilly, whom Byron thought guilty of causing or abetting dissension between Lady Byron and himself. But the letter loses nothing by the omission and does not even gain unfairly by it. There is nothing *false* in the contrast of comedy and sentiment concerning the cemetery. His impression by the epitaphs Byron gave in more letters than one. Nor is there any affectation in his remarks about his own burial, about his children, or any other subject. They did "pickle him and bring him home" (a quotation, not quite literal, from Sheridan's *Rivals*), and his funeral procession through London is the theme of a memorable passage in Borrow's *Lavengro*. "Juan" is of course *Don Juan*. "Allegra," his daughter by Jane (or as she re-christened herself, Claire) Clairmont—step-daughter of Godwin, through his second wife, and so a connection though no relation of Mrs. Shelley—died at five years old. "Ada," his and Lady Byron's only child, lived to marry Lord Lovelace, and continued his blood to the present day. "Electra" works out no further than the fact of her being the daughter of his "*moral* Clytemnestra," as he called Lady Byron, from her having been almost as fatal to his reputation as the actual Clytemnestra to her husband's life.

35. To Mr. Murray

Bologna, June 7. 1817.

TELL Mr. Hobhouse that I wrote to him a few days ago from Ferrara. It will therefore be idle in him or you to wait for any further answers or returns of proofs from Venice, as I have directed that no English letters be sent after me. The publication can be proceeded in without, and I am already sick of your remarks, to which I think not the least attention ought to be paid.

Tell Mr. Hobhouse that since I wrote to him I had availed myself of my Ferrara letters, and found the society much younger and better than that at Venice. I am very much pleased with the little the shortness of my stay permitted me to see of the Gonfaloniere Count Mosti, and his family and friends in general.

I have been picture-gazing this morning at the famous Domenichino and Guido, both of which are superlative. I afterwards went to the beautiful cemetery of Bologna, beyond the walls and found, besides the superb burial ground, an original of a Custode, who reminded me of the gravedigger in *Hamlet*.

He has a collection of capuchins' skulls, labelled on the forehead, and taking down one of them said "This is Brother Desiderio Birro, who died at forty—one of my best friends. I begged his head of his brethren after his decease, and they gave it me. I put it in lime and then boiled it. Here it is, teeth and all, in excellent preservation. He was the merriest, cleverest fellow I ever knew. Wherever he went he brought joy, and whenever anyone was melancholy, the sight of him was enough to make him cheerful again. He walked so actively, you might have taken him for a dancer—he joked—he laughed—oh! he was such a Frate as I never saw before, nor ever shall again!"

He told me that he had himself planted all the cypresses in the cemetery; that he had the greatest attachment to them and to his dead people; that since 1801 they had buried fifty-three thousand persons. In showing some older monuments, there was that of a Roman girl of twenty, with a bust by Bernini. She was a princess Bartorini, dead two centuries ago: he said that, on opening her grave, they had found her hair complete, and

"as yellow as gold."[1] Some of the epitaphs at Ferrara pleased me more than the more splendid monuments at Bologna; for instance:—

"MARTINI LUIGI
IMPLORA PACE."

"LUCREZIA PICINI
IMPLORA ETERNA QUIETE."

Can anything be more full of pathos? Those few words say all that can be said or sought, the dead had had enough of life; all they wanted was rest, and this they *implore*!

There is all the helplessness and humble hope, and deathlike prayer, that can arise from the grave—'implora pace.' I hope, whoever may survive me, and shall see me put in the foreigners' burying-ground at the Lido, within the fortress by the Adriatic, will see those two words, and no more, put over me. I trust they won't think of "pickling, and bringing me home to clod or Blunderbuss Hall." I am sure my bones would not rest in an English grave, or my clay mix with the earth of that country. I believe the thought would drive me mad on my death-bed, could I suppose that any of my friends would be base enough to convey my carcass back to your soil. I would not even feed your worms if I could help it.

So, as Shakespeare says of Mowbray, the banished Duke of Norfolk, who died at Venice (see *Richard II.*), that he, after fighting

"Against black Pagans, Turks and Saracens,
And toiled with works of war, retired himself

[1] No one who has seen the Roman girl's hair at York, nearer two thousand than two hundred years old, will doubt this, though *her* tresses are not "yellow."

> To Italy, and there, at *Venice*, gave
> His body to that *pleasant* country's earth,
> And his pure soul unto his captain, Christ,
> Under whose colours he had fought so long!"

Before I left Venice, I had returned to you your late, and Mr. Hobhouse's sheets of Juan. Don't wait for further answers from me, but address yours to Venice as usual. I know nothing of my own movements; I may return there in a few days, or not for some time. All this depends on circumstances. I left Mr. Hoppner very well, as well as his son and Mrs. Hoppner. My daughter Allegra was well too, and is growing pretty; her hair is growing darker, and her eyes are blue. Her temper and her ways, Mrs. H. says, are like mine, as well as her features: she will make, in that case, a manageable young lady.

I have never heard anything of Ada, the little Electra of my Mycenae. But there will come a day of reckoning, even if I should not live to see it. What a long letter I have scribbled.

Yours &c.

P.S. Here, as in Greece, they strew flowers on the tombs. I saw a quantity of rose-leaves, and entire roses, scattered over the graves at Ferrara. It has the most pleasing effect you can imagine.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY (1792-1822)

It may sometimes seem as if there were only two things that Shelley lacked—humour and common sense. As a matter of fact he possessed both, but allowed them to be perpetually stifled by other elements—not in themselves necessarily bad—of his character. If either—still better both—had been able to constitute themselves monarchs of his Brentford, Duumvirs of the rest, his political and religious extravagances would have been curbed; his less admirable actions would probably—for he would not have married and therefore would not have deserted poor Harriet—have been obviated; and it is by no means necessary that his poetry, though it could not have been much improved, should have been in any degree worsened. Shakespeare, one thinks, had plenty of both. Nor is this consideration irrelevant to the study of his letters. There are glimmerings of the humour which shines in *Peter Bell the Third*, and more of the common sense which is not needed, but by no means negatived, in the sublimer poems. But in the case suggested we should certainly have had more of them in a department than which they could have found no better home. Shelley wrote everything (after his intellectual infancy) that he did write, so excellently that he must have excelled here also. As it is, we must take him as we find him and be thankful. Since he wrote the following, English readers have perhaps been satiated with writings about Art. But rather more than 100 years ago there had been comparatively little of it and hardly anything, if anything at all, of this quality. And it may not be absurd to draw attention to the differences between

these descriptions and those in ornate prose that we have had since from Mr. Ruskin and others. Most of the latter are essentially prose though often very beautiful prose: Shelley's, though pure prose in form, are as it were scenarios for poetry. Indeed by this time poetry had taken almost entire possession of him, and he of her.

36. To Thomas Love Peacock

Bologna,
Monday, Nov[ember] 9, 1818.

My dear Peacock,

I have seen a quantity of things here—churches, palaces, statues, fountains, and pictures; and my brain is at this moment like a portfolio of an architect, or a print-shop, or a commonplace-book. I will try to recollect something of what I have seen; for, indeed, it requires, if it will obey, an act of volition. First, we went to the cathedral, which contains nothing remarkable, except a kind of shrine, or rather a marble canopy, loaded with sculptures, and supported on four marble columns. We went then to a palace—I am sure I forget the name of it—where we saw a large gallery of pictures. Of course, in a picture gallery you see three hundred pictures you forget, for one you remember. I remember, however, an interesting picture by Guido, of the Rape of Proserpine, in which Proserpine casts back her languid and half-unwilling eyes, as it were, to the flowers she had left ungathered in the fields of Enna. There was an exquisitely executed piece of Correggio, about four saints, one of whom seemed to have a pet dragon in a leash. I was told that it was the devil who was bound in that style—but who can make anything of

four saints? For what can they be supposed to be about? There was one painting, indeed, by this master, Christ beatified, inexpressibly fine. It is a half figure, seated on a mass of clouds, tinged with an ethereal, rose-like lustre; the arms are expanded; the whole frame seems dilated with expression; the countenance is heavy, as it were, with the weight of the rapture of the spirit; the lips parted, but scarcely parted, with the breath of intense but regulated passion; the eyes are calm and benignant; the whole features harmonised in majesty and sweetness. The hair is parted on the forehead, and falls in heavy locks on each side. It is motionless, but seems as if the faintest breath would move it. The colouring, I suppose, must be very good, if I could remark and understand it. The sky is of pale aërial orange, like the tints of latest sunset; it does not seem painted around and beyond the figure, but everything seems to have absorbed, and to have been penetrated by its hues. I do not think we saw any other of Correggio, but this specimen gives me a very exalted idea of his powers.

We went to see heaven knows how many more palaces —Ranuzzi, Marriscalchi, Aldobrandi. If you want Italian names for any purpose, here they are; I should be glad of them if I was writing a novel. I saw many more of Guido. One, a Samson drinking water out of an ass's jaw-bone, in the midst of the slaughtered Philistines. Why he is supposed to do this, God, who gave him this jaw-bone, alone knows—but certain it is, that the painting is a very fine one. The figure of Samson stands in strong relief in the foreground, coloured, as it were, in the hues of human life, and full of strength and elegance. Round him lie the Philistines in all the attitudes of death. One prone, with the slight convulsion of pain just passing from

his forehead, whilst on his lips and chin death lies as heavy as sleep. Another leaning on his arm, with his hand, white and motionless, hanging out beyond. In the distance, more dead bodies; and, still further beyond, the blue sea and the blue mountains, and one white and tranquil sail.

There is a Murder of the Innocents, also, by Guido, finely coloured, with much fine expression—but the subject is very horrible, and it seemed deficient in strength—at least, you require the highest ideal energy, the most poetical and exalted conception of the subject, to reconcile you to such a contemplation. There was a Jesus Christ crucified, by the same, very fine. One gets tired, indeed, whatever may be the conception and execution of it, of seeing that monotonous and agonised form for ever exhibited in one prescriptive attitude of torture. But the Magdalen, clinging to the cross with the look of passive and gentle despair beaming from beneath her bright flaxen hair, and the figure of St. John, with his looks uplifted in passionate compassion; his hands clasped, and his fingers twisting themselves together, as it were, with involuntary anguish; his feet almost writhing up from the ground with the same sympathy; and the whole of this arrayed in colours of diviner nature, yet most like nature's self. Of the contemplation of this one would never weary.

There was a "Fortune," too, of Guido; a piece of mere beauty. There was the figure of Fortune on a globe, eagerly proceeding onwards, and Love was trying to catch her back by the hair, and her face was half turned towards him; her long chestnut hair was floating in the stream of the wind, and threw its shadow over her fair forehead. Her hazel eyes were fixed on her pursuer, with a meaning look of playfulness, and a light smile was hovering on her

lips. The colours which arrayed her delicate limbs were ethereal and warm.

But, perhaps, the most interesting of all the pictures of Guido which I saw was a Madonna Lattante. She is leaning over her child, and the maternal feelings with which she is pervaded are shadowed forth on her soft and gentle countenance, and in her simple and affectionate gestures—there is what an unfeeling observer would call a dulness in the expression of her face; her eyes are almost closed; her lip depressed; there is a serious, and even a heavy relaxation, as it were, of all the muscles which are called into action by ordinary emotions: but it is only as if the spirit of love, almost insupportable from its intensity, were brooding over and weighing down the soul, or whatever it is, without which the material frame is inanimate and inexpressive.

There is another painter here, called Franceschini, a Bolognese, who, though certainly very inferior to Guido, is yet a person of excellent powers. One entire church, that of Santa Catarina, is covered by his works. I do not know whether any of his pictures have ever been seen in England. His colouring is less warm than that of Guido, but nothing can be more clear and delicate; it is as if he could have dipped his pencil in the hues of some serenest and star-shining twilight. His forms have the same delicacy and aërial loveliness; their eyes are all bright with innocence and love; their lips scarce divided by some gentle and sweet emotion. His winged children are the loveliest ideal beings ever created by the human mind. These are generally, whether in the capacity of Cherubim or Cupid, accessories to the rest of the picture; and the underplot of their lovely and infantine play is something almost pathetic from the excess of its unpretending beauty.

One of the best of his pieces is an Annunciation of the Virgin:—the Angel is beaming in beauty; the Virgin, soft, retiring, and simple.

We saw, besides, one picture of Raphael—St. Cecilia: this is in another and higher style; you forget that it is a picture as you look at it; and yet it is most unlike any of those things which we call reality. It is of the inspired and ideal kind, and seems to have been conceived and executed in a similar state of feeling to that which produced among the ancients those perfect specimens of poetry and sculpture which are the baffling models of succeeding generations. There is a unity and a perfection in it of an incommunicable kind. The central figure, St. Cecilia, seems rapt in such inspiration as produced her image in the painter's mind; her deep, dark, eloquent eyes lifted up; her chestnut hair flung back from her forehead—she holds an organ in her hands—her countenance, as it were, calmed by the depth of its passion and rapture, and penetrated throughout with the warm and radiant light of life. She is listening to the music of heaven, and, as I imagine, has just ceased to sing, for the four figures that surround her evidently point, by their attitudes, towards her; particularly St. John, who, with a tender yet impassioned gesture, bends his countenance towards her, languid with the depth of his emotion. At her feet lie various instruments of music, broken and unstrung. Of the colouring I do not speak; it eclipses nature, yet it has all her truth and softness.

JOHN KEATS (1795-1821)

A GOOD deal has already been said of Keats in the Introduction; but a little more may be pardoned on that most remarkable correspondence with his brother and sister-in-law which is there mentioned, and which it is hoped may be fairly sampled here. There is nothing quite like it: and one can only be thankful to the Atlantic (which here at least can have "disappointed" nobody worth mentioning) for causing the separation that brought it about. The inspirations which it shows were happily double. We do not know very much about George Keats, but John's family affection was of the keenest, and this was the only member of the family who was, in all the circumstances, likely to sympathise thoroughly with the poet in his poetry as in other things. Georgiana is said to have been personally attractive and mentally gifted beyond the common: and there is no doubt that this excited something more than mere family devotion in such an impressionable person as Keats. The combined reagency of these relatives has given us what we have from no other English poet—for the simple reason that no other English poet has had such a chance of giving it to us. The only thing to regret is that it could not continue longer: and that is only a necessary operation of Fate. The particular passage chosen here is one of the best known perhaps, but it is also one of the most illuminating: for it gives at once Keats's natural and simple interest in ordinary things, with no mere trivialities: his *real* attitude (so different from that long attributed to him!) as regards the attacks of critics, and his passion for beauty apart from mere hedonism. The "Charmian" was at one

time supposed to be Miss Brawne: but this was an error. She was a Miss Jane Cox, and nothing is heard of her afterwards.

37. To George and Georgiana Keats

[October 14 or 15, 1818]

I CAME by ship from Inverness, and was nine days at Sea without being sick. A little qualm now and then put me in mind of you; however, as soon as you touch the shore, all the horrors of sickness are soon forgotten, as was the case with a lady on board, who could not hold her head up all the way. We had not been in the Thames an hour before her tongue began to some tune—paying off, as it was fit she should, all old scores. I was the only Englishman on board. There was a downright Scotchman, who, hearing that there had been a bad crop of potatoes in England, had brought some triumphant specimens from Scotland. These he exhibited with national pride to all the ignorant lightermen and watermen from the Nore to the Bridge. I fed upon beef all the way; not being able to eat the thick porridge which the Ladies managed to manage, with large, awkward, horn spoons into the bargain. Reynolds has returned from a six-weeks' enjoyment in Devonshire; he is well, and persuades me to publish my "Pot of Basil" as an answer to the attacks made on me in "Blackwood's Magazine" and the "Quarterly Review." There have been two Letters in my defence in the Chronicle and one in the Examiner, copied from the Exeter Paper, and written by Reynolds. I do not know who wrote those in the Chronicle. This is a mere matter of the moment—I think I shall be among the English Poets after my death.

Even as a Matter of present interest the attempt to crush me in the "Quarterly" has only brought me more into notice, and it is a common expression among book-men, "I wonder the Quarterly should cut its own throat." It does me not the least harm in Society to make me appear little and ridiculous: I know when a man is superior to me and give him all due respect; he will be the last to laugh at me; and as for the rest I feel that I make an impression upon them which insures me personal respect while I am in sight, whatever they may say when my back is turned.

The Misses —— are very kind to me, but they have lately displeased me much, and in this way: Now I am coming the Richardson! On my return, the first day I called, they were in a sort of taking or bustle about a Cousin of theirs, who, having fallen out with her Grand-papa in a serious manner, was invited by Mrs. —— to take asylum in her house. She is an East-Indian, and ought to be her grandfather's heir. At the time I called, Mrs. —— was in conference with her upstairs, and the young ladies were warm in her praises downstairs, calling her genteel, interesting and a thousand other pretty things to which I gave no heed, not being partial to nine-days' wonders—Now all is completely changed—they hate her, and from what I hear she is not without faults of a real kind: but she has others, which are more apt to make women of inferior charms hate her. She is not a Cleopatra, but is, at least, a Charmian. She has a rich Eastern look; she has fine eyes and fine manners. When she comes into the room she makes an impression the same as the Beauty of a Leopardess. She is too fine and too conscious of herself to repulse any Man who may address her; from habit she thinks that nothing *particular*. I

always find myself more at ease with such a woman: the picture before me always gives me a life and animation which I cannot possibly feel with anything inferior. I am at such times too much occupied in admiring to be awkward or in a tremble: I forget myself entirely, because I live in her. You will, by this time, think that I am in love with her, so, before I go any further, I will tell you I am not. She kept me awake one night, as a tune of Mozart's might do. I speak of the thing as a pastime and an amusement, than which I can feel none deeper than a conversation with an imperial woman, the very "yes" and "no" of whose life is to me a banquet. I don't cry to take the moon home with me in my pocket, nor do I fret to leave her behind me. I like her, and her like, because one has no *sensations*; what we both are is taken for granted. You will suppose I have by this had much talk with her—no such thing; there are the Misses —— on the look out. They think I don't admire her because I don't stare at her; they call her a flirt to me—what a want of knowledge! She walks across a room in such a manner that a man is drawn towards her with a magnetic power; this they call flirting! They do not know things; they do not know what a woman is. I believe, though, she has faults; the same as Charmian and Cleopatra might have had. Yet she is a fine thing, speaking in a worldly way; for there are two distinct tempers of mind in which we judge of things—the worldly, theatrical and pantomimical; and the unearthly, spiritual and ethereal. In the former, Buonaparte, Lord Byron and this Charmian hold the first place in our minds; in the latter, John Howard, Bishop Hooker rocking his child's cradle, and you, my dear sister, are the conquering feelings. As a man of the world I love the rich talk of a

Charmian; as an eternal being I love the thought of you. I should like her to ruin me, and I should like you to save me.

> " I am free from men of pleasure's cares,
> By dint of feelings far more deep than theirs."

This is " Lord Byron," and is one of the finest things he has said.

THE CARLYLES—THOMAS (1795-1881) AND JANE WELSH (1801-1866)

A PARADOXER, even of a less virulent-frivolous type than that with which we have been recently afflicted, might sustain, for some little time at any rate, the argument against preservation of letters from the case of this eminent couple. If Mrs. Carlyle had not written hers, or if they had remained unknown, the whole sickening controversy about the character and married life of the pair might, as was said in the Introduction, never have existed. And if Carlyle himself had written none, persons of any intelligence would still have had a pretty adequate idea of him from his *Works*. On the other hand the addition to knowledge in his case is quite welcome: and in hers it practically gives us what we could hardly have known otherwise—one of the most remarkable of woman-natures, and one of the most striking confirmations of the merciless adage "Whom the gods curse, to them they grant the desires of their hearts." For she wanted above all things to be the wife of a man of genius—and she was. So the *pro* and the *con* in this matter may so far be set against each other. But there remains to credit a considerable amount of most welcome and (notably in the instance specified in the Introduction) almost consummate literature of the epistolary kind. This instance itself is perhaps too tragic for our little collection: indeed it might help to spread the exaggerated idea of the writer's unhappiness which has been too prevalent already. There is some "metal more attractive" in her letters, which perhaps, taken all round, put her with Madame de Sévigné and "Lady Mary" at the head of all *published*

women letter-writers. And Carlyle's annotations to them, when not too bilious or too penitent, show him almost at his best. His own (given below) to FitzGerald (the way in which epistolary literature interconnects itself has been noted) appears to me one of his most characteristic though least volcanic utterances. It was written while he was in the depths of what his wife called "the Valley of the Shadow of Frederick," (*i.e.* his vast book on that amiable monarch) and had retired to *extra*-solitude in consequence. "Farlingay" refers to a recent stay in Suffolk with FitzGerald. As often with Carlyle, there may be more than one interpretation of his inverted commas at "gentleman" as regards Voltaire, to whom he certainly would not have allotted the word in its best sense. The phrase about Chaos and the Evil Genius is Carlyle shut up in narrow space like the other genius or genie in the Arabian Nights. The "*awful jangle* of bells" speaks his horror of any invading sound. The "Naseby matter" refers to a monument which he and FitzGerald had planned, and which (with the precedent investigation as to the battle which F. had conducted years before for his *Cromwell*), occupies a good deal of FitzGerald's own correspondence. Indeed, it is thanks to Naseby that we possess this very letter. FitzGerald says elsewhere that he kept only these Naseby letters of all Carlyle's correspondence with him, destroying the rest, as he did Thackeray's and Tennyson's, lest "private personal history should fall into some unscrupulous hands." One admires the conduct while one feels the loss. As for the monument, it never came off: though it was talked about for some thirty years. Mrs. Carlyle's—one of the early and, despite complaints, cheerful time, the other later and, despite its resignation, from "the Valley of the Shadow"—require no annotation, save in respect of Carlyle's own on *Deerbrook*. He might well call it "poor": it is indeed one of the few novels by a writer of any distinction, which one tolerably voracious novel-reader has found incapable of being read. And this is curious: for she had written good stories earlier.

38. To Edward Fitzgerald

Addiscombe Farm, Croydon.
15th Septr. 1855

Dear Fitzgerald,

I have been here ever since the day you last heard of me; leading the strangest life of absolute *Latrappism*; and often enough remembering Farlingay and you. I live perfectly alone, and without speech at all,—there being in fact nobody to speak to, except one austerely punctual housemaid, who does her functions, like an eight-day clock, generally without bidding. My wife comes out now and then to give the requisite directions; but commonly withdraws again on the morrow, leaving the monster to himself and his own ways. I have Books; a complete Edition of *Voltaire*, for one Book, in which I read for *use*, or for idleness oftenest, —getting into endless reflexions over it, mostly of a sad and not very utterable nature. I find V. a 'gentleman,' living in a world partly furnished with such; and that there are now almost no 'gentlemen' (not quite *none*): this is one great head of my reflexions, to which there is no visible *tail* or finish. I have also a Horse (borrowed from my fat Yeoman friend, who is at sea-bathing in Sussex); and I go riding, at great lengths daily, over hill and dale; this I believe is really the main good I am doing,—if in this either there be much good. But it is a strange way of life to me, for the time; perhaps not unprofitable; To let *Chaos* say out its say, then, and one's Evil Genius give one the very worst language he has, for a while. It is still to last for a week or more. Today, for the first time, I ride back to Chelsea, but mean to

return hither on Monday. There is a great circle of yellow light all the way from Shooter's Hill to Primrose Hill, spread round my horizon every night, I see it while smoking my pipe before bed (so bright, last night, it cast a visible shadow of me against the white window-shutters); and this is all I have to do with London and its *gases* for a fortnight or more. My wife writes to me, there was an awful jangle of bells last day she went home from this; a Quaker asked in the railway, of some porter, 'Can thou tell me what these bells mean?'—'Well, I suppose something is up. They say Sebastopol is took, and the Rushans run away.'—*À la bonne heure*; but won't they come back again, think you?

On the whole I say, when you get your little Suffolk cottage, you must have in it a 'chamber in the wall' for me, *plus* a pony that can trot, and a cow that gives good milk: with these outfits we shall make a pretty rustication now and then, not wholly *Latrappish*, but only *half*, on much easier terms than here; and I shall be right willing to come and try it, I for one party.—Meanwhile, I hope the Naseby matter is steadily going ahead; sale *completed*; and even the *monument* concern making way. Tell me a little how that and other matters are. If you are at home, a line is rapidly conveyed hither, steam all the way: after the beginning of the next week, I am at Chelsea, and (I dare so) there is a fire in the evenings now to welcome you there. Shew face in some way or other.

And so adieu; for my hour of riding is at hand.

Yours ever truly,

T. Carlyle.

39. To Mrs. Walsh,

Chelsea: Sept. 5, 1836.

My dear Aunt,

Now that I am fairly settled at home again, and can look back over my late travels with the coolness of a spectator, it seems to me that I must have tired out all men, women and children that have had to do with me by the road. The proverb says 'there is much ado when cadgers ride.' I do not know precisely what 'cadger' means, but I imagine it to be a character like me, liable to head-ache, to sea-sickness, to all the infirmities 'that flesh is heir to,' and a few others besides; the friends and relations of cadgers should therefore use all soft persuasions to induce them to remain at home.[1]

I got into that Mail the other night with as much repugnance and trepidation as if it had been a Phalaris' brazen bull, instead of a Christian vehicle, invented for purposes of mercy—not of cruelty. There were three besides myself when we started, but two dropped off at the end of the first stage, and the rest of the way I had, as usual, half of the coach to myself. My fellow-passenger had that highest of all terrestrial qualities, which for me a fellow-passenger can possess—he was silent. I think his name was Roscoe, and he read sundry long papers to himself, with the pondering air of a lawyer.

We breakfasted at Lichfield, at five in the morning, on muddy coffee and scorched toast, which made me once more lyrically recognise in my heart (not without a sign

[1] Clever as she was, she surely made a mistake here—unless she did it on purpose, which is quite possible. "Cadger" is of course only "beggar," and the proverb is the Scotch equivalent of ours about the "beggar on horseback," pretty frequently illustrated now-a-days.

of regret) the very different coffee and toast with which you helped me out of my headache. At two there was another stop of ten minutes, that might be employed in lunching or otherwise. Feeling myself more fevered than hungry, I determined on spending the time in combing my hair and washing my face and hands with vinegar. In the midst of this solacing operation I heard what seemed to be the Mail running its rapid course, and quick as lightning it flashed on me, 'There it goes! and my luggage is on the top of it, and my purse is in the pocket of it, and here am I stranded on an unknown beach, without so much as a sixpence in my pocket to pay for the vinegar I have already consumed!' Without my bonnet, my hair hanging down my back, my face half dried, and the towel, with which I was drying it, firm grasped in my hand, I dashed out—along, down, opening wrong doors, stumbling over steps, cursing the day I was born, still more the day on which I took a notion to travel, and arrived finally at the bar of the Inn, in a state of excitement bordering on lunacy. The barmaids looked at me 'with wonder and amazement.' 'Is the coach gone?' I gasped out. 'The coach? Yes!' 'Oh! and you have let it away without me! Oh! stop it, cannot you stop it?' and out I rushed into the street, with streaming hair and streaming towel, and almost brained myself against—the Mail! which was standing there in all stillness, without so much as a horse in it! What I had heard was a heavy coach. And now, having descended like a maniac, I ascended again like a fool, and dried the other half of my face, and put on my bonnet, and came back 'a sadder and a wiser woman.'

I did not find my husband at the 'Swan with Two Necks'; for we were in a quarter of an hour before the

appointed time. So I had my luggage put on the backs of two porters, and walked on to Cheapside, where I presently found a Chelsea omnibus. By and by, however, the omnibus stopped, and amid cries of 'No room, sir,' 'Can't get in,' Carlyle's face, beautifully set off by a broad-brimmed white hat, gazed in at the door, like the Peri, who, 'at the Gate of Heaven, stood disconsolate.' In hurrying along the Strand, pretty sure of being too late, amidst all the imaginable and unimaginable phenomena which the immense thoroughfare of a street presents, his eye (Heaven bless the mark !) had lighted on my trunk perched on the top of the omnibus, and had recognised it. This seems to me one of the most indubitable proofs of genius which he ever manifested. Happily, a passenger went out a little further on, and then he got in.

My brother-in-law had gone two days before, so my arrival was most well-timed. I found all at home right and tight; my maid seems to have conducted herself quite handsomely in my absence; my best room looked really inviting. A bust of Shelley (a present from Leigh Hunt), and a fine print of Albert Durer, handsomely framed (also a present) had still further ornamented it during my absence. I also found (for I wish to tell you all my satisfaction) every grate in the house furnished with a supply of coloured clippings, and the holes in the stair-carpet all darned, so that it looks like new. They gave me tea and fried bacon, and staved off my headache as well as might be. They were very kind to me, but, on my life, everybody is kind to me, and to a degree that fills me with admiration. I feel so strong a wish to make you all convinced how very deeply I feel your kindness, and just the more I would say, the less able I am to say anything.

God bless you all. Love to all, from the head of the house down to Johnny.

Your affectionate,

JANE W. CARLYLE.

40. To MRS. STIRLING, HILL STREET, EDINBURGH.

5 CHEYNE ROW, CHELSEA: October 21, 1859.

YOU dear nice woman! there you are! a bright cheering apparition to surprise one on a foggy October morning, over one's breakfast—that most trying institution for people who are 'nervous' and 'don't sleep!'

It (the photograph) made our breakfast this morning 'pass off,' like the better sort of breakfasts in Deerbrook,[1] in which people seemed to have come into the world chiefly to eat breakfast in every possible variety of temper!

Blessed be the inventor of photography! I set him above even the inventor of chloroform! It has given more positive pleasure to poor suffering humanity than anything that has 'cast[2] up' in my time or is like to—this art by which even the 'poor' can possess themselves of tolerable likenesses of their absent dear ones. And mustn't it be acting favourably on the morality of the country? I assure you I have often gone into my own room, in the devil's own humour—ready to answer at 'things in general,' and some things in particular—and, my eyes resting by chance on one of my photographs of long-ago places and people, a crowd of sad, gentle thoughts has rushed into my heart, and driven the devil out, as

[1] The Deerbrook breakfasts refer to Miss Martineau's poor novel. (T.C.)

[2] Turned. (T.C.)

clean as ever so much holy water and priestly exorcism could have done! I have a photograph of Haddington church tower, and my father's tombstone in it—of every place I ever lived at as a home—photographs of old lovers! old friends, old servants, old dogs! In a day or two, you, dear, will be framed and hung up among the 'friends.' And that bright, kind, indomitable face of yours will not be the least efficacious face there for exorcising my devil, when I have him! Thank you a thousand times for keeping your word! Of course you would—that is just the beauty of you, that you never deceive nor disappoint.

Oh my dear! my dear! how awfully tired I was with the journey home, and yet I had taken two days to it, sleeping—that is, attempting to sleep—at York. What a pity it is that Scotland is so far off! all the good one has gained there gets shaken off one in the terrific journey home again, and then the different atmosphere is so trying to one fresh from the pure air of Fife—so exhausting and depressing. If it hadn't been that I had a deal of housemaiding to execute during the week I was here before Mr. C. returned, I must have given occasion for newspaper paragraphs under the head of 'Melancholy Suicide.' But dusting books, making chair covers, and 'all that sort of thing,' leads one on insensibly to live—till the crisis gets safely passed.

My dear! I haven't time nor inclination for much letter-writing—nor have you, I should suppose, but do let us exchange letters now and then. A friendship which has lived on air for so many years together is worth the trouble of giving it a little human sustenance.

Give my kind regards to your husband—I like him—and believe me,

Your ever affectionate,

JANE WELSH CARLYLE.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY (1800-1859)

THERE are very few examples in biography where the publication of letters has had a happier effect on the general idea of the writer than in Macaulay's case. It is not here a question of historical trustworthiness, or even of literary-style, in both which respects he has come in for severe strictures and sometimes for rather half-hearted defence. Nor do the letters display any purely literary gifts in him (except perhaps a playfulness of humour or at least wit) which do not appear in the *History* and the *Essays*. But, as the exception may perhaps partly indicate, they extend and improve the notion of his personality in the most remarkable fashion. Even those who did not quarrel with his views sometimes, before Sir George Trevelyan's book, disliked and regretted what have been called his " pistolling ways "—the positive, hectoring " hold-your-tongue " sort of tone which dominated his productions. With the very rarest exceptions, themselves sometimes of a revealing and excusable frankness, this tone is, if not quite absent [1] from, much seldomer present in, his letters. He jokes without difficulty; talks without in the least monopolising the conversation; shows himself often willing to live and let live; and is on the whole as different a person as possible from the Macaulay who is sure that " every schoolboy " knows better than the author he is reviewing, and who finds

[1] Indeed it exemplifies Defoe's favourite proverb about " What is bred in the bone," etc.—as for instance when, while admitting Chesterfield's high position in some ways, he calls the *Letters* " for the most part trash." It is scarcely too much to call such criticism itself " trashy."

Johnson guilty of superstition and Swift of apostasy. "Happy thrice and more also" are those whose letters thus vindicate them. I have purposely chosen the following example (written to his sister) from the most *mundane* class. "Appointment" was to the *Indian* Council, which explains the "Cotton" and "Muslin" and other things. "Ellis" (Thomas Flower), a friend of Macaulay's from Cambridge days and his literary executor in part. "Lushington" (Stephen), a civilian lawyer of great eminence as a judge in Admiralty and ecclesiastical matters, but a rather violent politician. "Town"—Leeds. "Miss Berry" is annotated elsewhere. "Sir Stratford Canning," later Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, George Canning's cousin, and one of the most famous diplomatists of the nineteenth century, especially during his long tenure of the Embassy at Constantinople. *Vivian Grey*—Disraeli's first novel. "Lady Holland," the most famous hostess on the Whig side in the first half of the nineteenth century, but, by all accounts, a person now and then quite intolerable. "Allen" (John), an *Edinburgh Review*er, was familiarly called her "tame atheist" (All the company were of the Holland House "set"). "Bobus"—Robert Percy Smith, Sydney's elder brother, a great wit and scholar. "Cosher," an Irish word, is not always used in this sense of "chat."

41. To his Sister

LONDON: November 1833.

DEAR HANNAH,

Things stand as they stood; except that the report of my appointment is every day spreading more widely; and that I am beset by advertising dealers begging leave to make up a hundred cotton shirts for me, and fifty muslin gowns for you, and by clerks out of place begging to be my secretaries. I am not in very high spirits to-day, as I have just received a letter from

poor Ellis, to whom I had not communicated my intentions till yesterday. He writes so affectionately and so plaintively that he quite cuts me to the heart. There are few indeed from whom I shall part with so much pain; and he, poor fellow, says that, next to his wife, I am the person for whom he feels the most thorough attachment, and in whom he places the most unlimited confidence.

On the 11th of this month there is to be a dinner given to Lushington by the electors of the Tower Hamlets. He has persecuted me with importunities to attend and make a speech for him; and my father has joined in the request. It is enough, in these times, Heaven knows, for a man who represents, as I do, a town of a hundred and twenty thousand people to keep his own constituents in good humour; and the Spitalfields weavers and Whitechapel butchers are nothing to me. But, ever since I succeeded in what everybody allows to have been the most hazardous attempt of the kind ever made,—I mean in persuading an audience of manufacturers, all Whigs or Radicals, that the immediate alteration of the corn-laws was impossible, —I have been considered as a capital physician for desperate cases in politics. However, to return from that delightful theme, my own praises, Lushington, who is not very popular with the rabble of the Tower Hamlets, thinks that an oration from me would give him a lift. I could not refuse him directly, backed as he was by my father. I only said that I would attend if I were in London on the 11th, but I added that, situated as I was, I thought it very probable that I should be out of town.

I shall go to-night to Miss Berry's *soirée*. I do not know whether I told you that she resented my article on Horace Walpole so much that Sir Stratford Canning advised me not to go near her. She was Walpole's

greatest favourite. His Reminiscences are addressed to her in terms of the most gallant eulogy. When he was dying at past eighty, he asked her to marry him merely that he might make her a Countess and leave her his fortune. You know that in *Vivian Grey* she is called Miss Otranto. I always expected that my article would put her into a passion, and I was not mistaken; but she has come round again, and sent me a most pressing and kind invitation the other day.

I have been racketing lately, having dined twice with Rogers, and once with Grant. Lady Holland is in a most extraordinary state. She came to Rogers's, with Allen, in so bad a humour that we were all forced to rally, and make common cause against her. There was not a person at table to whom she was not rude; and none of us were inclined to submit. Rogers sneered; Sydney made merciless sport of her; Tom Moore looked excessively impertinent; Bobus put her down with simple straightforward rudeness; and I treated her with what I meant to be the coldest civility. Allen flew into a rage with us all, and especially with Sydney, whose guffaws, as the Scotch say, were indeed tremendous. When she and all the rest were gone, Rogers made Tom Moore and me sit down with him for half an hour, and we coshered over the events of the evening. Rogers said that he thought Allen's firing up in defence of his patroness the best thing that he has seen in him. No sooner had Tom and I got into the street than he broke forth: "That such an old stager as Rogers should talk such nonsense, and give Allen credit for attachment to anything but his dinner! Allen was bursting with envy to see us so free, while he was conscious of his own slavery."

Her Ladyship has been the better for this discipline.

She has overwhelmed me ever since with attentions and invitations. I have at last found out the cause of her ill-humour, or at least of that portion of it of which I was the object. She is in a rage at my article on Walpole, but at what part of it I cannot tell. I know that she is very intimate with the Waldegraves, to whom the manuscripts belong, and for whose benefit the letters were published. But my review was surely not calculated to injure the sale of the book. Lord Holland told me, in an aside, that he quite agreed with me, but that we had better not discuss the subject.

A note; and, by my life, from my Lady Holland: ‘Dear Mr. Macaulay, pray wrap yourself very warm, and come to us on Wednesday." No, my good Lady. I am engaged on Wednesday to dine at the Albion Tavern with the Directors of the East India Company; now my servants; next week, I hope, to be my masters.

Ever yours,

T. B. M.

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES (1803-1849)

BEDDOES belongs to the small but remarkable company of authors who, making little mark in their own time and none at all for some time afterwards, before very long come into something like their due, though they never can be exactly popular. He was certainly very eccentric and possibly quite mad: the circumstances of his suicide do more than justify the hopes of charity and the convention of coroners' juries, as to the latter conclusion. But he was an extremely poetical poet and a letter-writer of remarkable individuality and zest. Little notice seems to have been taken, by any save a very few elect, of the first collected publication of his work just after his death: though a single piece, *The Bride's Tragedy*, not by any means his best, had obtained praise in 1822—a time between the great poetical outburst of the early nineteenth century and the revival of its middle period. But Mr. Gosse's reissue in completer form of the *Poems* in 1890 and the *Letters* four years later, lodged him at once in the affection of all competent critics. With something of the more eccentric spirit of the seventeenth century in him, and something of the Romantic revival as shown in Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, he had much of his own, though he never got it thoroughly or sustainedly organised and expressed. His mingled passion and humour (especially the latter) "escape" —make fitful spurts and explosions—in his correspondence. Latterly this reflects his mental breakdown, increasingly in the prose; though only a few years before the end it contains wonderful verse such as the song, "The swallow leaves her nest," which is a link between Blake and Canon

Dixon. But earlier, as in the following, there is nothing beyond oddity. Of this there may seem to be a good share, but a few notes will make it intelligible. It clearly heralds, though the thing is first definitely indicated in a later letter, Beddoes' marvellous tragedy *Death's Jest-book*, which he wrote and re-wrote till it became like the picture in Balzac's story an "Unknown [and Unknowable] Masterpiece." The letter is further remarkable as combining intense admiration for the *old* masterpieces with a quite "modern" insistence on "begetting" rather than "reviving"—on "giving the literature of the age a spirit of its own," etc. For details: "Sulky" (compare the French *désobligeante*, celebrated by Sterne)—an obsolete form of chaise. "Breaking Priscian's head" is familiar enough for "using bad grammar," which the book-keeper very likely did; but the explanation may be more remote. "Like a ghost from the tomb" though not "quoted" is, of course, his beloved Shelley's ("The Cloud"). "*Biped* knock" = merely "double"—the peculiar rat-tat which postmen have mostly forgotten or not learnt—perhaps regarding it as a badge of slavery like "tips." *The Fatal Dowry*—attributed to (Field and) Massinger, and spoilt by Rowe into his nevertheless popular *Fair Penitent*,—is one of the finest examples of the second stage of Elizabethan drama. *Ultracrepidarian*—a term derived from the Latin proverb *ne sutor supra* (or *ultra*) *crepidam* and specially applied to the unpopular critic Gifford who had been a shoemaker—meaning generally "some one who *does* go beyond his last and meddles with things he does not understand." "McCready's" (Macready, the famous actor and manager) friend Walker was probably Sidney Walker the Shakespearian critic.

42. To Thomas Forbes Kelsall

26 Mall, Clifton.
(Postmark, Jan. 11. 1825)

Dear Kelsall—

Day after day since Christmas I have intended to write or go to London, and day after day I have deferred both projects; and now I will give you the adventures and mishaps of this present sunday. Remorse, and startling conscience, in the form of an old, sulky, and a shying, horse, hurried me to the 'Regulator' coach-office on Saturday: 'Does the Regulator and its team conform to the Mosaic decalogue, Mr. Book-keeper?' He broke Priscian's head, and through the aperture, assured me that it did not: I was booked for the inside:—"Call at 26 Mall for me."—"Yes, Sir, at ½ past five, A.M."—At five I rose like a ghost from the tomb, and betook me to coffee. No wheels rolled through the streets but the inaudible ones of that uncreated hour. It struck six,—a coach was called,—we hurried to the office but *the* coach was gone. Here followed a long Brutus-and-Cassius discourse between a shilling-buttoned-waistcoatteer of a porter and myself, which ended in my extending mercy to the suppliant coach-owners, and agreeing to accept a place for Monday. All well thus far. The biped knock of the post alighted on the door at twelve, and two letters were placed upon my German dictionary,—your own, which I at first intended to reply to vivâ voce, had not the second informed me of my brother's arrival in England, his short leave of absence, and his intention to visit me here next week. This twisted my strong purpose like a thread, and disposed me to remain here about ten days

longer. On the 21st at latest I go to London. Be there and I will join you, or, if not, pursue you to Southampton.

The Fatal Dowry has been cobbled, I see, by some purblind ultra-crepidarian—McCready's friend, Walker, very likely; but nevertheless, I maintain 'tis a good play, and might have been rendered very effective by docking it of the whole fifth act, which is an excrescence,—re-creating Novall, and making Beaumelle a great deal more ghost-gaping and moonlightish. The cur-tailor has taken out the most purple piece in the whole web—the end of the fourth Act—and shouldered himself into toleration through the prejudices of the pit, when he should have built his admiration on their necks. Say what you will, I am convinced the man who is to awaken the drama must be a bold trampling fellow, no creeper into worm-holes, no reviver even, however good. These reanimations are vampire-cold. Such ghosts as Marloe, Webster &c. are better dramatists, better poets, I dare say, than any contemporary of ours, but they are ghosts; the worm is in their pages; and we want to see something that our great-grandsires did not know. With the greatest reverence for all the antiquities of the drama, I still think that we had better beget than revive; attempt to give the literature of this age an idiosyncrasy and spirit of its own, and only raise a ghost to gaze on, not to live with—just now the drama is a haunted ruin.

. . . .

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING (1806-1861)

Mrs. Browning was in the habit of using rather extravagant language herself: and she has certainly been the victim of language extravagant enough both in praise (the more damaging of the two) and blame from others. FitzGerald's unlucky exaggeration (see Introduction) in one way may be set off by such opposite assertions as that some of her poems are "the best of their kind in the English language." But her letters need cause no such alarums and excursions. If they are sometimes what is called by youth "Early Victorian"—"Early Anything," and "Middle Anything" and "Late Anything," are sure to be found sooner or later by all wise persons to have their own place in life and history. And sentimentalism has, in private prose, an infinitely less provocative character than when it is displayed in published verse. A distinguished Scotch philosopher of the last generation laid it down that, in literature, for demonstrative exhibitions of affection and sorrow "the occasion should be adequate, and the actuality rare." But letter-writing, though it can be eminently literary, is always literature with a certain license attached to it: arising from the fact that it was not—or ought not to have been—intended for publication. And that naturalness of which so much has been said is displayed constantly and by no means disagreeably in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's epistles. In fact, you cannot help liking her the better for them—which in one way at least is the supreme test. The following, written soon after her marriage—an elopement of a kind, but certainly justifiable if ever one was—is a very pleasant specimen in more ways than one, as regards taste, temper,

and descriptive powers. It also contains no criticism, which in her case was apt to be extremely uncertain.

43. To Mrs. Martin

(Pisa) November 5, (1846)

IT was pleasant to me, my dearest friend, to think while I was reading your letter yesterday, that almost by that time you had received mine, and could not even seem to doubt a moment longer whether I admitted your claim of hearing and of speaking to the uttermost. I recognised you too entirely as my friend. Because you had put faith in me, so much the more reason there was that I should justify it as far as I could, and with as much frankness (which was a part of my gratitude to you) as was possible from a woman to a woman. Always I have felt that you have believed in me and loved me, and, for the sake of the past and of the present, your affection and your esteem are more to me than I could afford to lose, even in these changed and happy circumstances. So I thank you once more, my dear kind friends, I thank you both—I never shall forget your goodness. I feel it, of course, the more deeply, in proportion to the painful disappointment in other quarters . . . Am I bitter? The feeling, however, passes while I write it out, and my own affection for everybody will wait patiently to be 'forgiven' in the proper form, when everybody shall be at leisure properly. Assuredly, in the meanwhile, however, my case is not to be classed with other cases—what happened to me could not have happened, perhaps, with any other family in England . . . I hate and loathe everything too which is clandestine—we *both* do, Robert and I; and the manner the whole

business was carried on in might have instructed the least acute of the bystanders. The flowers standing perpetually on my table for the last two years were brought there by one hand, as everybody knew; and really it would have argued an excess of benevolence in an unmarried man with quite enough resources in London, to pay the continued visits he paid to me without some strong motive indeed. Was it his fault that he did not associate with everybody in the house as well as with me? He desired it; but no—that was not to be. The endurance of the pain of the position was not the least proof of his attachment to me. How I thank you for believing in him—how grateful it makes me! He will justify to the uttermost that faith. We have been married two months, and every hour has bound me to him more and more; if the beginning was well, still better it is now—that is what he says to me, and I say back again day by day. Then it is an 'advantage' to have an inexhaustible companion who talks wisdom of all things in heaven and earth, and shows besides as perpetual a good humour and gaiety as if he were—a fool, shall I say? or a considerable quantity more, perhaps. As to our domestic affairs, it is not to *my* honour and glory that the 'bills' are made up every week and paid more regularly 'than bard beseems,' while dear Mrs. Jameson laughs outright at our miraculous prudence and economy, and declares that it is past belief and precedent that we should not burn the candles at both ends, and the next moment will have it that we remind her of the children in a poem of Heine's who set up housekeeping in a tub, and inquired gravely the price of coffee. Ah, but she has left Pisa at last—left it yesterday. It was a painful parting to everybody. Seven weeks spent in such close neighbourhood—

a month of it under the same roof and in the same carriages —will fasten people together, and then travelling *shakes* them together. A more affectionate, generous woman never lived than Mrs. Jameson[1] and it is pleasant to be sure that she loves us both from her heart, and not only *du bout des lèvres.* Think of her making Robert promise (as he has told me since) that in the case of my being unwell he would write to her instantly, and she would come at once if anywhere in Italy. So kind, so like her. She spends the winter in Rome, but an intermediate month at Florence, and we are to keep tryst with her somewhere in the spring, perhaps at Venice. If not, she says that she will come back here, for that certainly she will see us. She would have stayed altogether perhaps, if it had not been for her book upon art which she is engaged to bring out next year, and the materials for which are to be *sought.* As to Pisa, she liked it just as we like it. Oh, it is so beautiful and so full of repose, yet not *desolate*: it is rather the repose of sleep than of death. Then after the first ten days of rain, which seemed to refer us fatally to Alfieri's 'piove e ripiove' came as perpetual a divine sunshine, such cloudless, exquisite weather that we ask whether it may not be June instead of November. Every day I am out walking while the golden oranges look at me over the walls, and when I am tired Robert and I sit down on a stone to watch the lizards. We have been to your seashore, too, and seen your island, only he insists on it (Robert does) that it is not Corsica

[1] Anna Jameson (1794-1860) was a woman of letters and an art-critic at one time of immense influence through her illustrated books on "Sacred and Legendary" (as well as some other) "Art." But, as somehow or other happens not infrequently, the objects of her "affection and generosity" did not include her husband.

but Gorgona, and that Corsica is not in sight. *Beautiful* and blue the island was, however, in any case. It might have been Romero's instead of either. Also we have driven up to the foot of the mountains, and seen them reflected down in the little pure lake of Ascuno, and we have seen the pine woods, and met the camels laden with faggots all in a line. So now ask me again if I enjoy my liberty as you expect. My head goes round sometimes, that is all. I never was happy before in my life. Ah, but, of course, the painful thoughts recur! There are some whom I love too tenderly to be easy under their displeasure, or even under their injustice. Only it seems to me that with time and patience my poor dearest papa will be melted into opening his arms to us—will be melted into a clear understanding of motives and intentions; I cannot believe that he will forget me, as he says he will, and go on thinking me to be dead rather than alive and happy. So I manage to hope for the best, and all that remains, all my life here, *is* best already, could not be better or happier. And willingly tell dear Mr. Martin I would take him and you for witnesses of it, and in the meanwhile he is not to send me tantalising messages; no, indeed, unless you really, really, should let yourselves be wafted our way, and could you do so much better at Pau? particularly if Fanny Hanford should come here. Will she really? The climate is described by the inhabitants as a 'pleasant spring throughout the winter,' and if you were to see Robert and me threading our path along the shady side everywhere to avoid the 'excessive heat of the sun' in this November (?) it would appear a good beginning. We are not in the warm orthodox position by the Arno because we heard with our ears one of the best physicians of the place advise against it. 'Better,'

he said, 'to have cool rooms to live in and warm walks to go out along.' The rooms we have are rather over-cool perhaps; we are obliged to have a little fire in the sitting-room, in the mornings and evenings that is; but I do not fear for the winter, there is too much difference to my feelings between this November and any English November I ever knew. We have our dinner from the Trattoria at two o'clock, and can dine our favourite way on thrushes and Chianti with a miraculous cheapness, and no trouble, no cook, no kitchen; the prophet Elijah or the lilies of the field took as little thought for their dining, which exactly suits us. It is a continental fashion which we never cease commending. Then at six we have coffee, and rolls of milk, made of milk, I mean, and at nine our supper (call it supper, if you please) of roast chestnuts and grapes. So you see how primitive we are, and how I forget to praise the eggs at breakfast. The worst of Pisa is, or would be to some persons, that, socially speaking, it has its dullnesses; it is not lively like Florence, not in that way. But we do not want society, we shun it rather. We like the Duomo and the Campo Santo instead. Then we know a little of Professor Ferucci, who gives us access to the University library, and we subscribe to a modern one, and we have plenty of writing to do of our own. If we can do anything for Fanny Hanford, let us know. It would be too happy, I suppose, to have to do it for yourselves. Think, however, I am quite well, quite well. I can thank God, too, for being alive and well. Make dear Mr. Martin keep well, and not forget himself in the Herefordshire cold—draw him into the sun somewhere. Now write and tell me everything of your plans and of you both, dearest friends. My husband bids me say that he desires to have my friends for his own friends, and that

he is grateful to you for not crossing that feeling. Let him send his regards to you. And let me be throughout all changes,

Your ever faithful and most affectionate,

BA

EDWARD FITZGERALD (1809-1883)

Not much need be added to what was said in the Introduction about this famous translator and almost equally, though less uniquely, remarkable letter-writer. His life was entirely uneventful and his friendships have been already commemorated. The version of Omar Khayyàm appeared in 1859; was an utter " drug "—remainder copies going at a few pence—for a time; but became one of the most admired books of the English nineteenth century before very long. Some of his *Letters* were published at various times from 1889 to 1901 (those to Fanny Kemble in 1895). It is not perhaps merely fanciful to suggest that the " uniqueness " above glanced at does supply a sort of connection between the *Letters* and the *Works*. The faculty of at once retaining the matter of a subject and transforming it in treatment has perhaps never, as regards translation, been exhibited in such transcendence as in the English *Rubaiyàt*. But something of this same faculty must belong to every good letter-writer—and a good deal of it certainly is shown by FitzGerald in *his* letters. Indeed one of the processes of letter- and memoir-study (the memoir as has been said is practically an " open " letter) is that of comparing the treatments of the same subject by different persons—say of the Great Fire by Pepys and Evelyn, of the Riots of '80 by Walpole and Johnson. He himself, as will be seen, calls the letter given below " not very interesting." It seems to me very interesting indeed: and likely to be increasingly so as time goes on. Few things could be more characteristic of the writer than his way of " visiting his sister " by living alone in lodgings all *day* for

a month. The "*old* age"—forty-five—is hardly less s . The allusions to "Alfred" (Tennyson); "old" Thackeray, for whom he constantly keeps the affectionate school and college use of the adjective; Landor [1] (who unluckily did *not* die at Bath though he might have done so but for one of the last and least creditable of his eccentricities); Beckford ("Old Vathek"), and a fourth "old," Rogers (who was one of FitzGerald's aversions); Oxford (as yet almost unstained by any modernities spiritual or material); and Bath [2] (to remain still longer a "haunt of ancient peace")—are precious. The fifth "old," Spedding, who devoted chiefly to Bacon talents worthy of more varied exercise, was one of the innermost Tennyson set, as was "Harry" Lushington, who died very soon after this letter was written. "Your Book" is F. Tennyson's *Days and Hours*, a volume of poetry while reading which probably many people have wondered in what respect it came short of really great poetry, though they felt it did so.

44. To Frederic Tennyson

BATH May 7/54.

MY DEAR FREDERIC,

You see to what fashionable places I am reduced in my old Age. The truth is however I am come here by way of Visit to a sister I have scarce seen these six years; my visit consisting in this that I live alone in a lodging of my own by day, and spend two

[1] "Fitz's" remarks on Landor's judgment of "Pictures, Books and Men" are very amusing; for they have been often repeated in regard to his own on all these subjects. In fact the two, though FitzGerald was not so childish as Landor, had much in common.

[2] The curious eulogy—preferring it to Oxford as being "large and busy" enough to "drown one as much" as London—is also very characteristic of FitzGerald. You can be alone in the country *and* in a large town—hardly in a small one.

or three hours with her in the Evening. This has been my way of Life for three weeks, and will be so for some ten days more: after which I talk of flying back to more native counties. I was to have gone on to see Alfred in his "Island Home" from here: but it appears he goes to London about the same time I quit this place: so I must and shall defer my Visit to him. Perhaps I shall catch a sight of him in London; as also of old Thackeray who, Donne writes me word, came suddenly on him in Pall Mall the other day: while all the while people supposed *The Newcomes* were being indited at Rome or Naples.

If ever you live in England you must live here at Bath. It really is a splendid City in a lovely, even a noble, Country. Did you ever see it? One beautiful feature in the place is the quantity of Garden and Orchard it is all through embroidered with. Then the Streets, when you go into them, are as handsome and gay as London, gayer and handsomer because cleaner and in a clearer Atmosphere; and if you want the Country you get into it (and a very fine Country) on all sides and directly. Then there is such Choice of Houses, Cheap as well as Dear, of all sizes, with good Markets, Railways etc. I am not sure I shall not come here for part of the Winter. It is a place you would like, I am sure: though I do not say but you are better in Florence. Then on the top of the hill is old Vathek's Tower, which he used to sit and read in daily, and from which he could see his own Fonthill, while it stood. Old Landor quoted to me 'Nullus in orbe locus, etc.,' apropos of Bath: he, you may know, has lived here for years, and I should think would die here, though not yet. He seems so strong that he may rival old Rogers; of whom indeed one Newspaper gave what is called an 'Alarming Report of Mr. Rogers' Health' the other day,

but another contradicted it directly and indignantly, and declared the Venerable Poet never was better. Landor has some hundred and fifty Pictures; each of which he thinks the finest specimen of the finest Master, and has a long story about, how he got it, when, etc. I dare say some are very good: but also some very bad. He appeared to me to judge of them as he does of Books and Men; with a most uncompromising perversity which the Phrenologists must explain to us after his Death.

By the bye, about your Book, which of course you wish me to say something about. Parker sent me down a copy 'from the Author' for which I hereby thank you. If you believe my word, you already know my Estimation of so much that is in it: you have already guessed that I should have made a different selection from the great Volume which is now in Tatters. As I differ in Taste from the world, however, quite as much as from you, I do not know but you have done very much better in choosing as you have; the few people I have seen are very much pleased with it, the Cowells at Oxford delighted. A Bookseller there sold all his Copies the first day they came down: and even in Bath a Bookseller (and not one of the Principal) told me a fortnight ago he had sold some twenty copies. I have not been in Town since it came out: and have now so little correspondence with literati I can't tell you about them. There was a very unfair Review in the *Athenaeum*; which is the only Literary Paper I see: but I am told there are laudatory ones in *Examiner* and *Spectator*.

I was five weeks at Oxford, visiting the Cowells in just the same way that I am visiting my Sister here. I also liked Oxford greatly: but not so well I think as Bath: which is so large and busy that one is drowned in it as

much as in London. There are often concerts, etc., for those who like them; I only go to a shilling affair that comes off every Saturday at what they call the Pump Room. On these occasions there is sometimes some Good Music if not excellently played. Last Saturday I heard a fine Trio of Beethoven. Mendelssohn's things are mostly tiresome to me. I have brought my old Handel Book here and recreate myself now and then with pounding one of the old Giant's Overtures on my sister's Piano, as I used to do on that Spinnet at my Cottage. As to Operas, and Exeter Halls, I have almost done with them: they give me no pleasure, I scarce know why.

I suppose there is no chance of your being over in England this year, and perhaps as little Chance of my being in Italy. All I can say is, the latter is not impossible, which I suppose I may equally say of the former. But pray write me. You can always direct to me at Donne's, 12, St. James' Square, or at Rev. G. Crabbe's, Bredfield, Woodbridge. Either way the letter will soon reach me. Write soon, Frederic, and let me hear how you and yours are: and don't wait, as you usually do, for some inundation of the Arno to set your pen agoing. Write ever so shortly and whatever-about-ly. I have no news to tell you of Friends. I saw old Spedding in London; only doubly calm after the death of a Niece he dearly loved and whose deathbed at Hastings he had just been waiting upon. Harry Lushington wrote a martial Ode on seeing the Guards march over Waterloo Bridge towards the East: I did not see it, but it was much admired and handed about, I believe. And now my paper is out: and I am going through the rain (it is said to rain very much here) to my Sister's. So Goodbye, and write to me, as I beg you, in reply to this long if not very interesting letter.

FRANCES ANNE KEMBLE (1809-1893)

To what has been said before of this remarkably gifted lady little need be added. The two letters which follow, derived from *Further Records* (London, 1890), were written rather late in her life, but are characteristic, in ways partly coinciding, partly divergent, of her strong intellect [1] and her powers of expression. The note to the ghost-story leaves open the question whether Fanny did or did not know the accepted doctrine that the master and mistress of a haunted house are exempt from actual haunting. The "whiff of grape-shot" (as Carlyle might have called it) on the "Bakespearian" absurdity is one of the best things on the subject that the present writer, in a long and wide experience, has come across.

45. To H—— [EXTRACT]

York Farm, Branchtown,
Philadelphia, Monday May 18th, 1874.

ONE evening that my maid was sitting in the room from which she could see the whole of the staircase and upper landing, she saw the door of my bedroom open, and an elderly woman in a flannel dressing-gown, with a bonnet on her head, and a candle in her hand

[1] Sometimes one thinks her the wisest woman who ever lived. "Nothing seems stranger than the delusions of other people *when they have ceased to be our own*" suggests La Rochefoucauld and comes near to Solomon; but whosoever may have antici-

come out, walk the whole length of the passage, and return again into the bedroom, shutting the door after her. My maid knew that I was in the drawing-room below in my usual black velvet evening dress; moreover, the person she had seen bore no resemblance either in figure or face to me, or to any member of my household, which consisted of three young servant women besides herself, and a negro man-servant. My maid was a remarkably courageous and reasonable person, and, though very much startled (for she went directly upstairs and found no one in the rooms), she kept her counsel, and mentioned the circumstance to nobody, though, as she told me afterwards, she was so afraid lest I should have a similar visitation, that she was strongly tempted to ask Dr. W—'s advice as to the propriety of mentioning her experience to me. She refrained from doing so, however, and some time later, as she was sitting in the dusk in the same room, the man-servant came in to light the gas and made her start, observing which, he said, "Why, lors, Miss Ellen, you jump as if you had seen a ghost." In spite of her late experience, Ellen very gravely replied, "Nonsense, William, how can you talk such stuff! You don't believe in such things as ghosts, do you?" "Well," he said, "I don't know just so sure what to say to that, seeing it's very well known there was a ghost in this house." "Pshaw!" said Ellen. "Whose ghost?" "Well, poor Mrs. R—'s ghost, it's very well known, walks

pated or prompted her, he is not at the moment within my memory. But she is often not wise at all: and even her good wits are not always left unaffected by her bad temper. It is really amusing to read Mrs. Carlyle's rather mischievous account of Mrs. Butler (F. K.'s married name) calling and carrying a whip "to keep her hand in": and *then* to come on F. K.'s waspish resentment at these words, when they were published.

about this house, and no great wonder either, seeing how miserably she lived and died here." To Ellen's persistent expressions of contemptuous incredulity, he went on, "Well, Miss Ellen, all I can say is, several girls" (*i e.* maid-servants) "have left this house on account of it"; and there the conversation ended. Some days after this, Ellen coming into the drawing-room to speak to me, stopped abruptly at the door, and stood there, having suddenly recognized in a portrait immediately opposite to it, and which was that of the dead mistress of the house, the face of the person she had seen come out of my bed-room. I think this a very tidy ghost story; and I am bound to add, as a proper commentary on it, that I have never inhabited a house which affected me with a sense of such intolerable melancholy gloominess as this; without any assignable reason whatever, either in its situation or any of its conditions. My maid, to the present day, persists in every detail (and without the slightest variation) of this experience of hers, absolutely rejecting my explanation of it; that she had heard, without paying any particular attention to it, some talk among the other servants about the ghost in the house, which had remained unconsciously to her in her memory, and reproduced itself in this morbid nervous effect of her imagination.

46. To H—— [EXTRACT]

YORK FARM, Sunday, December 6th, 1874.

MY DEAREST H——,

It is not possible for me to feel the slightest interest in the sort of literary feat which I consider writing upon "who wrote Shakespeare?" to be. I was very intimate with Harness, Milman, Dyce, Collier—

all Shakespearian editors, commentators, and scholars—and this absurd theory about Bacon, which was first broached a good many years ago, never obtained credit for a moment with them; nor did they ever entertain for an instant a doubt that the plays attributed to William Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon were really written by him. Now I am intimately acquainted and in frequent communication with William Donne, Edward FitzGerald, and James Spedding, all thorough Shakespeare scholars, and the latter a man who has just published a work upon Bacon, which has been really the labour of his life; none of these men, competent judges of the matter, ever mentions the question of "Who wrote Shakespeare?" except as a ludicrous thing to be laughed at, and I think they may be trusted to decide whether it is or is not so.

I have a slight feeling of disgust at the attack made thus on the personality of my greatest mental benefactor; and consider the whole thing a misapplication, not to say waste, of time and ingenuity that might be better employed. As I regard the memory of Shakespeare with love, veneration, and gratitude, and am proud and happy to be his countrywoman, considering it among the privileges of my English birth, I resent the endeavour to prove that he deserved none of these feelings, but was a mere literary impostor. I wonder the question had any interest for you, for I should not have supposed you imagined Shakespeare had not written his own plays, Irish though you be. Do you remember the servant's joke in the farce of "High Life Below Stairs" where the cook asks, "Who wrote Shakespeare?" and one of the others answers, with, at any rate, partial plausibility, "Oh! why, Colley Cibber, to be sure!"

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY
(1811-1863)

So much has been said of Thackeray's letter-writing powers in the Introduction that not much need be added here on the general side. But a few words may be allowed on what we may call the *conditioning* circumstances which affected these powers, and made the result so peculiar. Except in Swift's case—a thing piquant in itself considering the injustice of the later writer to the earlier—hardly any body of letters exhibits these conditions so obviously and in so varied a fashion. In both there was the utmost intellectual satire combined with the utmost tenderness of feeling. Thackeray of course, partly from nature and partly from the influence of time, did not mask his tenderness and double-edge his severity with roughness and coarseness. But the combination was intrinsically not very different. There has also to be taken into account in Thackeray's case domestic sorrow—coming quickly and life-long after it began; means long restricted (partly by his own folly but not so more tolerable); recognition of genius almost as long deferred; and yet other "maladies of the soul." The result was a constant ferment, of which the letters are in a way the relieving valve or tap. That they are often apparently light-hearted has nothing surprising in it: for when a man habitually "eats his heart" it naturally becomes lighter—till there is nothing of it left.

He is, however, not easy to "sample," there being, as has been said, no authorised collection to draw upon and other difficulties in the way. What follows may serve for fault

of a better: and the *Spectator* letter-pastiche referred to above under Walpole, will complete it perhaps more appropriately than may at first appear. For while the latter is quite Addisonian, not merely in dress but in body, its soul is blended of two natures—the model's and the artist's—in the rather uncanny fashion which makes *Esmond* as a whole so marvellous, except to those stalwarts who hold that, as nobody before the twentieth century knew anything about anything, Thackeray could not know about the eighteenth.

47. To Miss Lucy Baxter

Washington, Saturday
Feb. 19. 1853.

MY DEAR LITTLE KIND LUCY:

I began to write you a letter in the railroad yesterday, but it bumped with more than ordinary violence, and I was forced to give up the endeavour. I did not know how ill Lucy was at that time, only remembered that I owed her a letter for that pretty one you wrote me at Philadelphia, when Sarah was sick and you acted as her Secretary. Is there going to be always Somebody sick at the brown house? If I were to come there now, I wonder should I be allowed to come and see you in your night-cap—I wonder even do you wear a night-cap? I should step up, take your little hand, which I daresay is lying outside the coverlet, give it a little shake; and then sit down and talk all sorts of stuff and nonsense to you for half an hour; but very kind and gentle, not so as to make you laugh too much or your little back ache any more. Did I not tell you to leave off that beecely jimnayshum? I am always giving fine advice to girls in brown houses, and they

always keep on never minding. It is not difficult to write lying in bed—this is written not in bed, but on a sofa. If you write the upright hand it's quite easy; slantingdicular is not so pleasant, though. I have just come back from Baltimore and find your mother's and sister's melancholy letters. I thought to myself, perhaps I might see them on this very sofa and pictured to myself their 2 kind faces. Mr. Crampton was going to ask them to dinner, I had made arrangements to get Sarah nice partners at the ball—Why did dear little Lucy tumble down at the Gymnasium? Many a pretty plan in life tumbles down so, Miss Lucy, and falls on its back. But the good of being ill is to find how kind one's friends are; of being at a pinch (I do not know whether I may use the expression—whether "pinch" is an indelicate word in this country; it is used by our old writers to signify poverty, narrow circumstances, res angusta)—the good of being poor, I say, is to find friends to help you, I have been both ill and poor, and found, thank God, such consolation in those evils; and I daresay at this moment, now you are laid up, you are the person of the most importance in the whole house—Sarah is sliding about the room with cordials in her hands and eyes; Libby is sitting quite disconsolate by the bed (poor Libby! when one little bird fell off the perch, I wonder the other did not go up and fall off, too!) the expression of sympathy in Ben's eyes is perfectly heart-rending; even George is quiet; and your Father, Mother and Uncle (all 3 so notorious for their violence of temper and language) have actually forgotten to scold. "Ach, du lieber Himmel," says Herr Strumpf—isn't his name Herr Strumpf?—the German master, "die schöne Fräulein ist krank!" and bursts into tears on the Pianofortyfier's shoulder when they hear the news (through

his sobs) from black John. We have an Ebony femme de chambre here; when I came from Baltimore just now I found her in the following costume and attitude standing for her picture to Mr. Crowe. She makes the beds with that pipe in her mouf and leaves it about in the rooms. Wouldn't she have been a nice lady's-maid for your mother and Miss Bally Saxter?

But even if Miss Lucy had not had her fall, I daresay there would have been no party. Here is a great snow-storm falling, though yesterday was as bland and bright as May (English May, I mean) and how could we have lionized Baltimore, and gone to Mount Vernon, and taken our diversion in the snow? There would have been nothing for it but to stay in this little closet of a room, where there is scarce room for 6 people, and where it is not near so comfortable as the brown house. Dear old b.h., shall I see it again soon? I shall not go farther than Charleston, and Savannah probably, and then I hope I shall get another look at you all again before I commence farther wanderings—O, stop! I didn't tell you why I was going to write you—well, I went on Thursday to dine with Governor and Mrs. Fish, a dinner in honor of me—and before I went I arrayed myself in a certain white garment of which the collar-button-holes had been altered, and I thought of the kind, friendly little hand that had done that deed for me; and when the Fisheses told me how they lived in the Second Avenue (I had forgotten all about 'em)—their house and the house opposite came back to my mind, and I liked them 50 times better for living near some friends of mine. She is a nice woman, Madam Fish, besides; and didn't I abuse you all to her? Good bye, dear little Lucy—I wish the paper wasn't full. But I have been sitting half an hour by the poor young lady's

sofa, and talking stuff and nonsense, haven't I? And now I get up, and shake your hand with a God bless you! and walk down stairs, and please to give everybody my kindest regards, and remember that I am truly your friend.

W. M. T.

48. THE "TRUMPET" COFFEE-HOUSE, WHITEHALL.

'MR SPECTATOR—

I am a gentleman but little acquainted with the town, though I have had a university education, and passed some years serving my country abroad, where my name is better known than in the coffee-houses and St. James's.

'Two years since my uncle died, leaving me a pretty estate in the county of Kent; and being at Tunbridge Wells last summer, after my mourning was over, and on the look-out, if truth must be told, for some young lady who would share with me the solitude of my great Kentish house, and be kind to my tenantry (for whom a woman can do a great deal more good than the best-intentioned man can), I was greatly fascinated by a young lady of London, who was the toast of all the company at the Wells. Everyone knows Saccharissa's beauty; and I think, Mr. Spectator, no one better than herself.

'My table-book informs me that I danced no less than seven-and-twenty sets with her at the assembly. I treated her to the fiddles twice. I was admitted on several days to her lodging, and received by her with a great deal of distinction, and, for a time, was entirely her slave. It was only when I found, from common talk of the company at the Wells, and from narrowly watching one, who I once

thought of asking the most sacred question a man can put to a woman, that I became aware how unfit she was to be a country gentleman's wife; and that this fair creature was but a heartless worldly jilt, playing with affections that she never meant to return, and, indeed, incapable of returning them. 'Tis admiration such women want, not love that touches them; and I can conceive, in her old age, no more wretched creature than this lady will be, when her beauty hath deserted her, when her admirers have left her, and she hath neither friendship nor religion to console her.

'Business calling me to London, I went to St. James's Church last Sunday, and there opposite me sat my beauty of the Wells. Her behaviour during the whole service was so pert, languishing and absurd; she flirted her fan, and ogled and eyed me in a manner so indecent, that I was obliged to shut my eyes, so as actually not to see her, and whenever I opened them beheld hers (and very bright they are) still staring at me. I fell in with her afterwards at Court, and at the playhouse; and here nothing would satisfy her but she must elbow through the crowd and speak to me, and invite me to the assembly, which she holds at her house, nor very far from Ch—r—ng Cr—ss.

'Having made her a promise to attend, of course I kept my promise; and found the young widow in the midst of a half-dozen of card-tables, and a crowd of wits and admirers. I made the best bow I could, and advanced towards her; and saw by a peculiar puzzled look in her face, though she tried to hide her perplexity, that she had forgotten even my name.

'Her talk, artful as it was, convinced me that I had guessed aright. She turned the conversation most ridiculously upon the spelling of names and words; and

I replied with as ridiculous, fulsome compliments as I could pay her; indeed, one in which I compared her to an angel visiting the sick-wells, went a little too far; nor should I have employed it, but that the allusion came from the Second Lesson last Sunday, which we both had heard, and I was pressed to answer her.

'Then she came to the question, which I knew was awaiting me, and asked how I *spelt* my name? "Madam," says I, turning on my heel, "I spell it with the y." And so I left her, wondering at the light-heartedness of the town-people, who forget and make friends so easily, and resolved to look elsewhere for a partner for your constant reader.

'CYMON WYLDOATS.

'You know my real name, Mr. Spectator, in which there is no such a letter as *hupsilon*. But if the lady, whom I have called Saccharissa, wonders that I appear no more at the tea-tables, she is hereby respectfully informed the reason y.'

CHARLES DICKENS (1812-1870)

THERE are few better examples by converse of the saying (familiar in various forms and sometimes specially applied to writing and answering letters) that it is only idle people who have no time to do anything, than Dickens. He was by no means long-lived: and for the last three-fifths—practically the whole busy time—of his life, he was one of the busiest of men. He wrote many universally known books, and not a few, in some cases not so well known, articles. He travelled a great deal; edited periodicals for many years, taking that duty by no means in the spirit of Olympian aloofness which some popular opinion connects with editorship; only sometimes shirked society; and had all sorts of miscellaneous occupations and avocations. His very fancy for long walks might seem one of the least compatible with letter-writing; yet a very large bulk of his letters (by no means mainly composed of editorial ones) has been published, and there are no doubt many unpublished. There have been different opinions as to their comparative rank as letters, but there can be no difference as to the curious full-bloodedness and plenitude of life which, in this as in all other divisions of his writing, characterises Dickens's expression of his thoughts and feelings. Perhaps, as might be generally though not universally expected, the comic ones are the more delightful: at any rate they seem best worth giving here. The first—to a schoolboy who had written to him about *Nicholas Nickleby*—is quite charming; the second, to the famous actor-manager who after being a Londoner by birth and residence for half a century had just retired, is almost Charles Lamb-

like; and the third deserved to have been put in t e original mouth of Mrs. Gamp![1]

49. To Master Hastings Hughes

Doughty Street, London.
Dec. 12th. 1838.

RESPECTED SIR,

I have given Squeers one cut on the neck and two on the head, at which he appeared much surprised and began to cry, which, being a cowardly thing, is just what I should have expected from him—wouldn't you?

I have carefully done what you told me in your letter about the lamb and the two "sheeps" for the little boys. They have also had some good ale and porter, and some wine. I am sorry you didn't say *what* wine you would like them to have. I gave them some sherry, which they liked very much, except one boy, who was a little sick and choked a good deal. He was rather greedy, and that's the truth, and I believe it went the wrong way, which I say served him right, and I hope you will say so too.

Nicholas had his roast lamb, as you said he was to, but he could not eat it all, and says if you do not mind his doing so he should like to have the rest hashed to-morrow with some greens, which he is very fond of, and so am I. He said he did not like to have his porter hot, for he thought it spoilt the flavour, so I let him have it cold. You

[1] One of the pleasantest, *to me*, of Dickens's letters is that in which, extravagant anti-Tory as he was, he refuses to let a contributor echo the too common grudges at Lockhart (see *inf.* under Stevenson). But it is very short, and perhaps of no general interest.

should have seen him drink it. I thought he never would have left off. I also gave him three pounds of money, all in sixpences, to make it seem more, and he said directly that he should give more than half to his mamma and sister, and divide the rest with poor Smike. And I say he is a good fellow for saying so; and if anybody says he isn't I am ready to fight him whenever they like—there!

Fanny Squeers shall be attended to, depend upon it. Your drawing of her is very like, except that I don't think the hair is quite curly enough. The nose is particularly like hers, and so are the legs. She is a nasty disagreeable thing, and I know it will make her very cross when she sees it; and what I say is that I hope it may. You will say the same I know—at least I think you will.

I meant to have written you a long letter, but I cannot write very fast when I like the person I am writing to, because that makes me think about them, and I like you, and so I tell you. Besides, it is just eight o'clock at night, and I always go to bed at eight o'clock, except when it is my birthday, and then I sit up to supper. So I will not say anything more besides this—and that is my love to you and Neptune; and if you will drink my health every Christmas Day I will drink yours—come.

I am,
Respected Sir,
Your affectionate Friend.

P.S. I don't write my name very plain,[1] but you know what it is you know, so never mind.

[1] Referring, I suppose, to the well-known and "inimitable" (but by no means indispensable) flourish of his signature.

50. To Mr. W. C. Macready

Saturday, May 24th, 1851.

MY DEAR MACREADY,

We are getting in a good heap of money for the Guild. The comedy has been very much improved, in many respects, since you read it. The scene to which you refer is certainly one of the most telling in the play. And there *is* a farce to be produced on Tuesday next, wherein a distinguished amateur will sustain a variety of assumption-parts, and in particular, Samuel Weller and Mrs. Gamp, of which I say no more. I am pining for Broadstairs, where the children are at present. I lurk from the sun, during the best part of the day, in a villainous compound of darkness, canvas, sawdust, general dust, stale gas (involving a vague smell of pepper), and disenchanted properties. But I hope to get down on Wednesday or Thursday.

Ah! you country gentlemen, who live at home at ease, how little do you think of us among the London fleas! But they tell me you are coming in for Dorsetshire. You must be very careful, when you come to town to attend to your parliamentary duties, never to ask your way of people in the streets. They will misdirect you for what the vulgar call "a lark," meaning, in this connection, a jest at your expense. Always go into some respectable shop or apply to a policeman. You will know him by his being dressed in blue, with very dull silver buttons, and by the top of his hat being made of sticking-plaster. You may perhaps see in some odd place an intelligent-looking man, with a curious little wooden table before him and three thimbles on it. He will want you to bet, but

don't do it. He really desires to cheat you. And don't buy at auctions where the best plated goods are being knocked down for next to nothing. These, too, are delusions. If you wish to go to the play to see real good acting (though a little more subdued than perfect tragedy should be), I would recommend you to see —— at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane. Anybody will show it to you. It is near the Strand, and you may know it by seeing no company whatever at any of the doors. Cab fares are eightpence a mile. A mile London measure is half a Dorsetshire mile, recollect. Porter is twopence per pint; what is called stout is fourpence. The Zoological Gardens are in the Regent's Park, and the price of admission is one shilling. Of the streets, I would recommend you to see Regent Street and the Quadrant, Bond Street, Piccadilly, Oxford Street, and Cheapside. I think these will please you after a time, though the tumult and bustle will at first bewilder you. If I can serve you in any way, pray command me. And with my best regards to your happy family, so remote from this Babel.

Believe me, my dear Friend,
Ever affectionately yours.
[CHARLES DICKENS]

P.S. I forgot to mention just now that the black equestrian figure you will see at Charing Cross, as you go down to the House, is a statue of *King Charles the First.*[1]

[1] "The comedy" is Bulwer-Lytton's *Not so Bad as we Seem*, acted by Dickens and other amateurs for charity at Devonshire House seventy years ago, and about to be reproduced *in loco* as these proofs are being revised.

51. To Mr. Edmund Yates

Tavistock House,
Tuesday, Feb. 2nd. 1858.

MY DEAR YATES,

Your quotation is, as I supposed, all wrong. The text *is not* "Which his 'owls was organs." When Mr. Harris went into an empty dog-kennel, to spare his sensitive nature the anguish of overhearing Mrs. Harris's exclamations on the occasion of the birth of her first child (the Princess Royal of the Harris family), "he never took his hands away from his ears, or came out once, till he was showed the baby." On encountering that spectacle, he was (being of a weakly constitution) "took with fits." For this distressing complaint he was medically treated; the doctor "collared him, and laid him on his back upon the airy stones"—please to observe what follows—"and she was told, to ease her mind, his 'owls was organs."

That is to say, Mrs. Harris, lying exhausted on her bed, in the first sweet relief of freedom from pain, merely covered with the counterpane, and not yet "put comfortable," hears a noise apparently proceeding from the back-yard, and says, in a flushed and hysterical manner: "What 'owls are those? Who is a-'owling? Not my ugebond?" Upon which the doctor, looking round one of the bottom posts of the bed, and taking Mrs. Harris's pulse in a reassuring manner, says, with much admirable presence of mind: "Howls, my dear madam?—no, no, no! What are we thinking of? Howls, my dear Mrs. Harris? Ha, ha, ha! Organs, ma'am, organs. Organs in the streets, Mrs. Harris; no howls."

Yours faithfully, [C. D.]

CHARLES KINGSLEY (1819-1875)

THERE are some people who, while thinking that the author of *Westward Ho!* has not, at least recently, been given his due rank in critical estimation, admit certain explanations of this. As a historian and in almost all his writings Kingsley was inaccurate,—almost (as his friend and brother-in-law Froude was once said to be) "congenitally inaccurate"; in his novels and elsewhere he went out of his way to tread on the corns of all sorts of people; he constantly ventured out of his depth in such subjects as philosophy and theology; and he suffered a terrible defeat by rashly engaging, and by tactical ineptitude, in his contest with Newman. His politics, in which matter at one time he engaged hotly, were those of a busier and more educated Colonel Newcome. His poems, which were his least unequal work, seem never to have attracted due notice.

But none of his foibles—not even corn-treading—is a fatal defect in familiar letter-writing: consequently he has good chance here, and his *Letters and Memoirs* have been deservedly often reprinted. It is true that letters cannot show in full the really exceptional versatility which enabled the same man to write *Yeast* and *Westward Ho!*, *Andromeda* and *The Water Babies*, the best of the Essays and the best of the Sermons, *Alton Locke* and *At Last*. But they can and they do show it in part: and it gives them the interest which has been noticed in other cases. Indeed in one respect—as a writer—Kingsley is perhaps better in his letters than in his *Essays*, where he too often affects a Macaulayesque positiveness on rather inadequate grounds. The following specimen should show him in pleasantly

varied character—as a thoroughly human person, a good sportsman, and what Matthew Arnold (by no means himself very liberal of praise to his literary contemporaries) thought him—" the most generous man [he had] ever known; the most forward to praise, the most willing to admire, the most free from all thought of himself in praising and admiring and the most incapable of being made ill-natured by having to support ill-natured attacks upon himself." It is to be feared that Mr. Arnold did not go far wrong when he declared, " Among men of letters I know nothing so rare as this."

It is true that the author of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* was an intimate personal friend, and in politics and other things a close comrade of Kingsley's; but he was as generous to others, and while the scars of the battle with Newman were almost fresh, he writes that he has read *The Dream of Gerontius* "with admiration and awe." θυμός, in this sense = "spirit." "Jaques" = "Jack" = " Pike," while on the other side we get, through him of *As You Like It*, an explanation of " melancholies." And in fact the pike is not a cheerful-looking fish. Even two whom the present writer once saw tugging at the two ends of one dead trout in a shallow, did it sulkily.

52. To Tom Hughes, Esq.

Jan. 12. 1857.

I HAVE often been minded to write to you about 'Tom Brown.' I have puffed it everywhere I went, but I soon found how true the adage is that good wine needs no bush, for every one had read it already, and from every one, from the fine lady on her throne to the red-coat on his cock-horse and the school-boy on his forrum (as our Irish brethren call it), I have heard but one word, and that is, that it is the jolliest book they ever read. Among a knot of red-coats at the cover-side, some

very fast fellow said, 'If I had had such a book in my boyhood, I should have been a better man now!' and more than one capped his sentiment frankly. Now isn't it a comfort to your old bones to have written such a book, and a comfort to see that fellows are in a humour to take it in? So far from finding men of our rank in a bad vein, or sighing over the times and prospects of the rising generation, I can't help thinking they are very teachable, humble, honest fellows, who want to know what's right, and if they don't go and do it, still think the worst of themselves therefor. I remark now, that with hounds and in fast company, I never hear an oath, and that, too, is a sign of self-restraint. Moreover, drinking is gone out, and, good God, what a blessing! I have good hopes, of our class, and better than of the class below. They are effeminate, and that makes them sensual. Pietists of all ages (George Fox, my dear friend, among the worst) never made a greater mistake than in fancying that by keeping down manly θυμός, which Plato saith is the root of all virtue, they could keep down sensuality. They were dear good old fools. However, the day of 'Pietism' is gone, and 'Tom Brown' is a heavy stone on its grave. 'Him no get up again after that,' as the niggers say of a buried obi-man. I am trying to polish the poems: but Maurice's holidays make me idle; he has come home healthier and jollier than ever he was in all his life, and is truly a noble boy. Sell your last coat and buy a spoon. I have a spoon of huge size (Farlow his make). I killed forty pounds weight of pike, &c., on it the other day, at Strathfieldsaye, to the astonishment and delight of ——, who cut small jokes on 'a spoon at each end,' &c., but altered his tone when he saw the melancholies coming ashore, one every ten minutes, and

would try his own hand. I have killed heaps of big pike round with it. I tried it in Lord Eversley's lakes on Monday, when the fish wouldn't have even his fly. Capricious party is Jaques. Next day killed a seven pounder at Hurst . . . . We had a pretty thing on Friday with Garth's, the first run I've seen this year. Out of the Clay Vale below Tilney Hall, pace as good as could be, fields three acres each, fences awful, then over Hazeley Heath to Bramshill, shoved him through a false cast, and a streamer over Hartford Bridge flat, into an unlucky earth. Time fifty-five minutes, falls plentiful, started thirty, and came in eight, and didn't the old mare go? Oh, Tom, she is a comfort; even when a bank broke into a lane, and we tumbled down, she hops up again before I'd time to fall off, and away like a four-year old. And if you can get a horse through that clay vale, why then you can get him 'mostwards'; leastwise so I find, for a black region it is, and if you ain't in the same field with the hounds, you don't know whether you are in the same parish, what with hedges, and trees, and woods, and all supernumerary vegetations. Actually I was pounded in a 'taty-garden,' so awful is the amount of green stuff in these parts. Come and see me, and take the old mare out, and if you don't break her neck, she won't break yours.

JOHN RUSKIN (1819-1900)

The peculiar wilfulness—the unkind called it wrong-headedness—which flecked and veined Mr. Ruskin's genius, had, owing to his wealth and to his entire indifference to any but his own opinion, opportunities of displaying itself in all his work, public as well as private, which are not common. Naturally, it showed itself nowhere more than in letters, and perhaps not unnaturally he often adopted the epistolary form in books which, had he chosen, might as well have taken another—while he might have chosen this in some which do not actually *call* themselves "letters." There is, however, little difference, except "fuller dress" of expression, between any of the classes of his work, whether it range from the first volume of *Modern Painters* to *Verona* in time, or from *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* to *Unto This Last* in subject. If anybody ever could "write beautifully about a broomstick" he could: though perhaps it is a pity that he so often did. But this faculty, and the entire absence of bashfulness which accompanied it, are no doubt grand accommodations for letter-writing; and the reader of Mr. Ruskin's letters gets the benefit of both very often—of a curious study of high character and great powers uncontrolled by logical self-criticism almost always. The following—part of a still longer letter which he addressed to the *Daily Telegraph*, Sep. 11, 1865, on the eternal Servant Question—was of course written for publication, but so, practically, was everything that ever came from its author. It so happens too that, putting aside his usual King Charles's Head of Demand and Supply, there is little in it of his more mischievous crotchets, nothing of the petulance (amounting

occasionally to rudeness) of language in which he sometimes indulged, but much of his nobler idealism, while it is a capital example of his less florid style. "Launce," "Grumio" and "Old Adam" are of course Shakespeare's: "Fairservice" (of whom, tormenting and selfish as he was, Mr. Ruskin perhaps thought a little too harshly) and "Mattie," Scott's. "Latinity enough"—the unfortunate man had written, and the newspaper had printed, *noc* instead of *hac*. "A book of Scripture," Colenso's work had just been finished. "Charlotte Winsor" a baby-farmer of the day.

53. From "The Daily Telegraph"

September 18, 1865.

DOMESTIC SERVANTS: SONSHIP AND SLAVERY.

To the Editor of "The Daily Telegraph."

SIR,

I have been watching the domestic correspondence in your columns with much interest, and thought of offering you a short analysis of it when you saw good to bring it to a close, and perhaps a note or two of my own experience, being somewhat conceited on the subject just now, because I have a gardener who lets me keep old-fashioned plants in the greenhouse, understands that my cherries are grown for the blackbirds, and sees me gather a bunch of my own grapes without making a wry face. But your admirable article of yesterday causes me to abandon my purpose; the more willingly, because among all the letters you have hitherto published there is not one from any head of a household which contains a complaint worth notice. All the masters or mistresses whose letters are thoughtful or well written say they get

on well enough with their servants; no part has yet been taken in the discussion by the heads of old families. The servants' letters, hitherto, furnish the best data; but the better class of servants are also silent, and must remain so. Launce, Grumio, or Fairservice may have something to say for themselves; but you will hear nothing from Old Adam nor from Carefu' Mattie. One proverb from Sancho, if we could get it, would settle the whole business for us; but his master and he are indeed "no more." I would have walked down to Dulwich to hear what Sam Weller had to say; but the high-level railway went through Mr. Pickwick's parlour two months ago, and it is of no use writing to Sam, for, as you are well aware, he is no penman. And, indeed, Sir, little good will come of any writing on the matter. "The cat will mew, the dog will have its day." You yourself, excellent as is the greater part of what you have said, and to the point, speak but vainly when you talk of "probing the evil to the bottom." This is no sore that can be probed, no sword nor bullet wound. This is a plague spot. Small or great, it is in the significance of it, not in the depth, that you have to measure it. It is essentially bottomless, cancerous; a putrescence through the constitution of the people is indicated by this galled place. Because I know this thoroughly, I say so little, and that little, as your correspondents think, who know nothing of me, and as you say, who might have known more of me, unpractically. Pardon me, I am no seller of plasters, nor of ounces of civet. The patient's sickness is his own fault, and only years of discipline will work it out of him. That is the only really "practical" saying that can be uttered to him.

The relation of master and servant involves every other—touches every condition of moral health through the

State. Put that right, and you put all right; but you will find that it can only come ultimately, not primarily, right; you cannot begin with it. Some of the evidence you have got together is valuable, many pieces of partial advice very good. You need hardly, I think, unless you wanted a type of British logic, have printed a letter in which the writer accused (or would have accused, if he had possessed Latinity enough) all London servants of being thieves because he had known one robbery to have been committed by a nice-looking girl. But on the whole there is much common sense in the letters; the singular point in them all, to my mind, being the inapprehension of the breadth and connection of the question, and the general resistance to, and stubborn rejection of, the abstract ideas of sonship and slavery, which include whatever is possible in wise treatment of servants. It is very strange to see that, while everybody shrinks at abstract suggestions of there being possible error in a book of Scripture, your sensible English housewife fearlessly rejects Solomon's opinion when it runs slightly counter to her own, and that not one of your many correspondents seems ever to have read the Epistle to Philemon. It is no less strange that while most English boys of ordinary position hammer through their Horace at one time or other time of their school life, no word of his wit or his teaching seems to remain by them: for all the good they get out of them, the Satires need never have been written. The Roman gentleman's account of his childhood and of his domestic life possesses no charm for them; and even men of education would sometimes start to be reminded that his "*noctes coenaeque Deum!*" meant supping with his merry slaves on beans and bacon. Will you allow me, on this general question of liberty and slavery, to refer

your correspondents to a paper of mine touching closely upon it, the leader in the *Art-Journal* for July last? and to ask them also to meditate a little over the two beautiful epitaphs on Epictetus and Zosima, quoted in the last paper of the *Idler*?

> "I, Epictetus, was a slave; and sick in body, and wretched in poverty; and beloved by the gods."
> "Zosima, who while she lived was a slave only in her body, has now found deliverance for that also."

How might we, over many an "independent" Englishman, reverse this last legend, and write—

> "This man, who while he lived was free only in his body, has now found captivity for that also."

I will not pass without notice—for it bears also on wide interests—your correspondent's question, how my principles differ from the ordinary economist's view of supply and demand. Simply in that the economy I have taught, in opposition to the popular view, is the science which not merely ascertains the relations of existing demand and supply, but determines what *ought* to be demanded and what *can* be supplied. A child demands the moon, and, the supply not being in this case equal to the demand, is wisely accommodated with a rattle; a footpad demands your purse, and is supplied according to the less or more rational economy of the State, with that or a halter; a foolish nation, not able to get into its head that free trade does indeed mean the removal of taxation from its imports, but not of supervision from them, demands unlimited foreign beef, and is supplied with the cattle murrain and the like. There may be all manner of demands, all manner of supplies. The true political economist regulates these; the false political economist

leaves them to be regulated by (not Divine) Providen e. For, indeed, the largest final demand anywhere report d of, is that of hell; and the supply of it (by the bro d gauge line) would be very nearly equal to the demand at this day, unless there were here and there a swineherd or two who could keep his pigs out of sight of the lake.

Thus in this business of servants everything depends on what sort of servant you at heart wish for or "demand." If for nurses you want Charlotte Winsors, they are to be had for money; but by no means for money, such as that German girl who, the other day, on her own scarce-floating fragment of wreck, saved the abandoned child of another woman, keeping it alive by the moisture from her lips. What kind of servant do you want? It is a momentous question for you yourself—for the nation itself. Are we to be a nation of shopkeepers, wanting only shop-boys: or of manufacturers, wanting only hands: or are there to be knights among us, who will need squires—captains among us, needing crews? Will you have clansmen for your candlesticks, or silver plate? Myrmidons at your tents, ant-born, or only a mob on the Gillies' Hill? Are you resolved that you will never have any but your inferiors to serve you, or shall Enid ever lay your trencher with tender little thumb, and Cinderella sweep your hearth, and be cherished there? It *might* come to that in time, and plate and hearth be the brighter; but if your servants are to be held your inferiors, at least be sure they *are* so, and that you are indeed wiser, and better-tempered, and more useful than they. Determine what their education ought to be, and organize proper servants' schools, and there give it them. So they will be fit for their position, and will do honour to it, and stay in it: let the masters be as sure they do honour to theirs, and are as

willing to stay in that. Remember that every people which gives itself to the pursuit of riches, invariably, and of necessity, gets the scum uppermost in time, and is set by the genii, like the ugly bridegroom in the Arabian Nights, at its own door with its heels in the air, showing its shoe-soles instead of a Face. And the reversal is a serious matter, if reversal be even possible, and it comes right end uppermost again, instead of to conclusive Wrong-end.

ROBERT LOUIS BALFOUR STEVENSON
(1850-1894)

The author of *Treasure Island* (invariably known to his friends simply as "Louis," the "Robert" being reserved in the form of "Bob" for his less famous but very admirable cousin the art-critic) will perhaps offer to some Matthew Arnold of posterity the opportunity of a paradox like that of our Matthew on Shelley. For a short time some of these friends—not perhaps the wisest of them—were inclined to regard him as, and to urge him to continue to be, a writer of criticisms and miscellaneous articles—a sort of new Hazlitt. Others no sooner saw the *New Arabian Nights* than they recognised a tale-teller such as had not been seen for a long time—such as, in respect of anything imitable, had never been seen before. And he fortunately fell in with these views and hopes. But all his tales are pure Romance, and Romance has her eclipses with the vulgar. On the other hand his letters are almost as good as his fiction, and not in the least open to the charges of a certain non-naturalness of style—even of thought—which could, justly or not, be brought against his other writings. And it is perhaps worth noting here that letters have held their popularity with all fit judges almost better than any other division of literature. Whether this is the effect of their "touches of nature" (using the famous phrase without the blunder so common in regard to it but not without reference to its context) need not be discussed.

As, by the kindness of Mr. Lloyd Osbourne, I am enabled to give here an unpublished letter of Stevenson's to myself, it may require some explanation, not only of the com-

mentatory and commendatory kind but of fact. Stevenson, coming to dine with me, had brought with him, and showed with much pride, a new umbrella (a seven-and-sixpenny one) which, to my surprise, he had bought. But when he went away that night he forgot it; and when I met him next day at the Savile and suggested that I should send it to him, there or somewhere, he said he was going abroad almost immediately and begged me to keep it for him. By this or that accident, but chiefly owing to his constant expatriations, no opportunity of restitution ever occurred: though I used to remind him of it as a standing joke, and treasured it religiously, stored and unused. This letter is partly in answer to a last reminder in which I said that I was going to present it to the nation, that it might be kept with King Koffee Kalcalli's, but as a memory of a "victor in romance" not of a vanquished enemy.

I of course told Mr. Kipling of the contents which concerned him: and he, equally of course, demanded delivery of the goods at once. But, half in joke, I demurred, saying that I was a bailee, and the gift was not formal enough, being undated and only a "suggestion"; he should have it without fail at my death, or Stevenson's.[1]

When alas! this latter came, I prepared to act up to my promise; but, alas! again, the umbrella had vanished! Some prated of mislaying in house-removal, of illicit use by servants, etc.; but for my part I had and have no doubt that the thing had been enskyed and constellated—like Ariadne's Crown, Berenice's Locks, Cassiopeia's Chair, and a whole galaxy of other now celestial objects—to afford a special place to my dead friend then, and to my live one when (may the time still be far distant) he is ready for it.

As for the more serious subject of the letter, I must refer curious readers to an essay of mine on Lockhart, originally published in 1884 and reprinted in *Essays in English*

[1] Of this *moratorium* I believe I duly advised R. L. S. and I don't think he objected. There was, if I remember rightly, a further reason for it—that I was living in two places at the time and the subject was not immediately at hand.

Literature some years later. To this reprint I subjoin·l, *before* I got this letter from R. L. S., a reasoned defence of Lockhart from the charge of cowardice and " caddishness": but it is evident that Stevenson had not yet seen it. When he did see it, he wrote me another letter chiefly about my book itself, and so of no interest to the public, but touching again on this Lockhart question. He avowed himself still dissatisfied: but said he was sorry for his original remark which was " ungracious and unhandsome " if not untrue, adding, " for to whom do I owe more pleasure than to Lockhart?"

54.

MY DEAR SAINTSBURY,

Thanks for yours. Why did I call Lockhart a cad? That calls for an answer, and I give it. " Scorpion "[1] literature seems at the best no very fit employment for a man of genius, which Lockhart was—and none at all for a gentleman. But if a man goes in for such a trade, he must be ready for the consequences; and I do not conceive a gentleman as a coward; the white feather is not his crest, it *almost* excludes—and I put the " almost " with reluctance. Well, now about the duel? Even Bel-Ami[2] turned up on the *terrain*." But Lockhart? *Et responsum est ab omnibus, Non est inventus.*[3] I have often wondered how Scott took that episode.[4] I

[1] Lockhart's (self-given) name in the "*Chaldee MS.*" was " the Scorpion that delighteth to sting the faces of men."

[2] Maupassant's ineffable hero and title-giver.

[3] Hardly any school-boy of my or Stevenson's generation would have needed a reference to the *Essay on Murder*. But I am told that De Quincey has gone out of fashion, with school-boys and others.

[4] We know now: also what " The Duke " said when consulted. They did not agree with Stevenson, but then they knew all the facts and he did not.

do not know how this view will strike you ;[1] it seems to me the "good old honest" fashion of our fathers, though I own it does not agree with the New Morality. "Cad" may be perhaps an expression too vivacious and not well chosen ; it is, at least upon my view, substantially just.

Now if you mean to comb my wig, comb it from the right parting—I know you will comb it well.

An infinitely small jest occurs to me in connection with the historic umbrella : and perhaps its infinite smallness attracts me. Would you mind handing it to Rudyard Kipling with the enclosed note ?[2] It seems to me fitly to consecrate and commemorate this most absurd episode.

Yours very sincerely,
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

[*Enclosure*]

This Umbrella
purchased in the year 1878 by
Robert Louis Stevenson
(and faithfully stabled for more than twelve years in the
halls of George Saintsbury)
is now handed on at the suggestion of the first and
by the loyal hands of the second,
to
Rudyard Kipling.

[1] I should have held it myself, if the facts had been what R. L. S. thought them.

[2] Which of course is Mr. Kipling's property, not mine. But he has most kindly joined in authorising its publication, and that of the rest of the letter as far as he is concerned.

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